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THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

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BONITA

"Why ain't you coming to our house this year?"

To accompany "For Shorty Cullen's Kids"—Page 253

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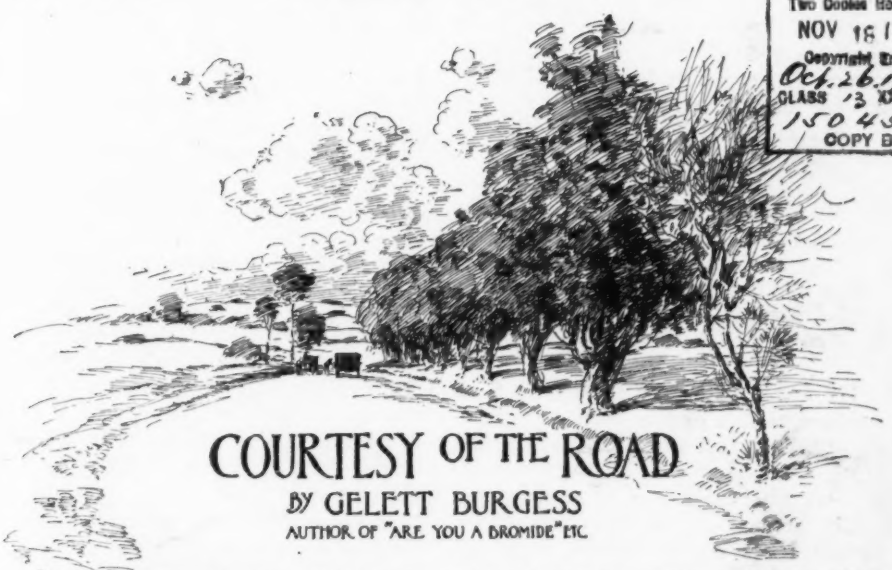
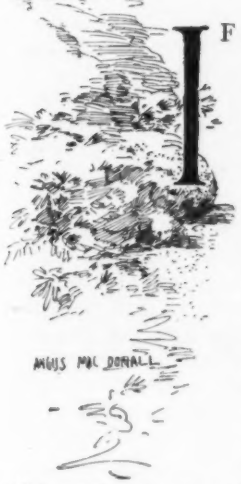


COURTESY OF THE ROAD

BY GELETT BURGESS

AUTHOR OF "ARE YOU A BROMIDE" ETC.



IF No. 9,999 knew anything about the courtesy of the road or the rules laid down by the Highway Commission she certainly did not show it. The pert, little, red runabout dodged along with alarming divagation, keeping, for the most part, to the left side of the way.

The chauffeur of the big six-cylinder Excelsior behind her was vexed, for there was scant room for passing. He lowed at her with his deep, three-toned siren, but the little runabout hugged the curb persistently until he attempted to shoot by on the right-hand side, when she made a sudden swerve in his direction. He had just time to dart past, between her and a telegraph pole, and even then not without scraping some of the paint off the mud-guards. The two cars clanged together as he went by.

It was aggravating, to say the least and for a little instant his breath had stopped, but once by his heart fell to pounding regularly.

His annoyance now arose to anger, despite the fact that he himself had violated the rules for passing vehicles. He turned back to catch a sight of the occupant of the runabout, who had been hidden, before, by the canopy top, and his resentment vanished.

She was by far the prettiest girl he had met that day; and it had been a day of pretty girls. She had neither automobile coat, veil or goggles, and, in that quick, backward glance of his, her full beauty flashed upon him. He saw a frightened face of an English type, blonde and statuesque and clean cut of features, her eyes star-

ing like those of a school-girl caught in some act of disobedience, the lips parted, showing a glimmer of white, even teeth. From beneath her sailor hat scattering tresses of light brown hair waved over her brow, and about her ears.

He had but this momentary impression, for, when one is driving a car at speed, every second's truancy of gaze from the road ahead is criminally dangerous. His eyes flew back to their duty, but his thoughts remained with the girl in the Axiom runabout. It would hardly do now to slow up and wait for her to pass. He had allowed the proper moment for an apology to go by, but he wanted to see her again. There were no cross streets ahead, so she would have to follow him or turn back. A second glance behind showed her laboring after. He drew up to the curb and stopped.

He was standing by the hood of his machine, with a monkey-wrench ostentatiously displayed, when she passed him. He looked at her with all the frankness a man's admiration is wont to show to a pretty woman, and, as the car went by, he noted the number, 9,999. Reaching into a pocket in the door of his tonneau, he looked it up in the official list of regulations.

"9,999 Miss Pearl Ditmar, 11,003 Boylston St. 20 H.P. Axiom."

So this was Miss Ditmar? He had heard of her. She was the heiress of one of Boston's best-known families, and had a reputation for eccentricity. That was why, probably, she was driving her own Axiom racer. He wondered if she had a license. No examination is necessary for one in Massachusetts, but one has to swear to having driven a car at least one hundred miles before one is permitted to go alone upon the public highway—a rule as consistent as the old one that one should know how to swim before going near the water. He was pretty sure, by her management of her Axiom, that Miss Ditmar had never driven any hundred miles. She had never been to an automobile school, either, for her engine was knocking badly, and her steering was wild.

He jumped into his seat, now, and went after her. One doesn't really run on wheels in a sixty horse-power Excelsior, one soars. Hills are not. His machine went as silently as a watch, picked up speed like lightning, and rode like a Pullman. It was a heavy car, straight of line and dark-blue in color, with nickel-plated trimmings. It contained everything one could think of to make travel easy and rapid. It was a flying residence—a special train condensed into a single carriage.

It did not take him long to catch the Axiom. The runabout was puffing up a heavy grade, making a great to-do, though he knew that, properly driven, she ought to do her work like a thoroughbred. She got to the top with difficulty, after having to change from her high speed to low, crawling up on the slow gear. He could hear the motor knock from where he hung back, five hundred feet behind her. Once over the summit, she threw off her clutch and coasted down the farther incline. The big Excelsior drew after her stealthily, and its driver waited for the end.

It came soon enough. As the girl attempted to put on the clutch to attack the opposite rise, there was a harsh, rising scream from her engine, and it was stalled with a jar. The car stopped. Instead of hurrying to her assistance, the driver of the car behind, stopped also, and waited to see what the girl would do. The moment had not yet come for him to intervene in her destiny. He watched her get out and go around to the front of her car. He smiled grimly as he saw her tugging at the crank. From the symptoms he had noticed he knew that a much different treatment, and that of the simplest, was necessary.

He cocked his leather cap a little to one side, gave a twist to his short mustache, and got back to his seat. The Excelsior started from the spark, and started on the high speed. In ten seconds the driver was alongside the runabout, and had stopped with his cap off to Beauty in Distress.

She looked up at him, her dark eyes lost in a tangle of stray curls, her lips quivering.

"Can't I help you?" he asked.

The frightened look on her face instantly gave way to an expression of relief.

"Oh, *do* you think you could do anything?" she replied. "It turns so hard that I can't start the engine. I'm afraid that there's something the matter. She's been making the most awful noises for the last hour—just like an animal in pain. What d'you suppose it could be?"

She was indubitably good to look at—and as soon as he could take his eyes from the pink flush that was pervading the delicate cream-white of her cheeks, he went to the water tank in the front of the hood, unscrewed the cap and looked in.

"What's that place? Is that where they keep the gasoline?" she asked, timidly. "They told me that it was full."

He looked at her in surprise. "This is the water tank," he replied. "And it's as dry as a bone. No wonder she screamed. I suppose you've overheated your engines. How's your oil? Does it feed all right?"

"I—don't—know. I suppose so. They always put oil in it, don't they, at the *garage?* It's horrid of them not to have given it any water—I shall complain of them for that. It's a perfectly new car. I should think it ought to go all right."

"It's the new cars that give the most trouble, and no car will run without oil and water. Let's see—the oil reservoir seems to be full. I'll go and see if I can't find some water for you."

"Oh, can't I help you? It's awfully good of you, really." She tossed her hair from her forehead and looked at him with flashing eyes.

"You might come along in my car and hold the pail from slopping," he suggested.

She looked at him, as if afraid he might not return, and then at the car, as if she felt she ought not leave it.

"Oh, I guess nobody'll steal your car—not till she's cooled off some, at any rate," he said. "But if you want to wait here, I'll come back."

"I think I'll go with you," she said, her color rising.

"Very well, get in, then."

She got up beside him nimbly and they started along a curve of the road shaded with a row of tall elms. His eyes alternated from a quick glance at the road ahead, and a slow look at her profile beside him. She sat demurely erect, her hands in her lap, without a glance in his direction, for a while; then, in the softest of voices she said,

"It's awfully good of you to help me. I don't know what I should have done, alone." She turned to him soberly.

"Oh, that's all right, Miss Ditmar," he answered.

She suddenly opened her eyes very wide and looked full at him in surprise. Then the color surged into her cheeks again, and she bit her lip.

"How in the world did you know my name?" she asked faintly, turning away.

He handed her the Automobile List that was on the seat beside him, and she took it up curiously, raising her eyebrows and slightly shrugging her shoulders. After turning over a few pages she said, with an arch smile,

"What is the number of this car? I didn't notice."

"7,001," he replied, smiling in return.

She lost no time in looking it up. Then she smiled more frankly upon him. "Oh—then you're Mr. Carl Mirchett, aren't you? I think I've heard of you, too."

"I hope you've heard the right things," he said, sitting up a bit straighter, and throwing back his shoulders.

"Oh, delicious things!" Her eyelids narrowed charmingly as she looked through them mischievously. "You're a great traveler, aren't you?"

"Oh, I've been about a bit," he answered.

"I've been away, too—on the Continent. I suppose that's why we haven't met before. You weren't in town last Spring?"

"No—out West. Long distance touring. I hear you play polo."

She bit her lip again. "Oh, some. It's a bore, though."

"I should think it would be, for a girl! I don't care for much of anything but motoring. I'd like to give you a few lessons. You don't know much about engines, do you?"

"No. They're such dirty, messy things. My man attends to all that."

"Yes, but an owner ought to know something about the machine. There's no knowing what may happen when you're alone."

"Oh, some one is sure to come along and help."

He frowned. Her air was now more free and jaunty, as if she had suddenly become very sure of him, and had cast off all responsibility, trusting in his assistance.

"Some men who might come along would know precious little that would be of any help," he said. "I've known owners of five thousand dollar cars who couldn't find the spark-plug to save their lives. I saw a gentleman tied up on the road the other day with a car full of people, who was trying to start up with the gasoline valve turned off."

"Oh, I think it's more fun not to know anything about the machinery. It's so much more interesting and mysterious. When my chauffeur tries to talk to me about gaskets and things it bores me to death."

"Have you got a good man?" he asked, with interest.

"He's awfully dirty," she replied.

"There's no need of that." He brushed the dust off his gauntlets as he spoke. "I should think it would be fun driving for a lady—she wouldn't be meddling with the valves and buzzer all the time."

"He's all the time flirting with my maid, though."

He laughed. "Never with you?" he asked.

"No! The idea! I never speak to him while we're out, except to give him his directions."

They had come round a curve in the road bordered with trees, to the first house in that direction, a desolate, frame building apparently deserted, with a shabby stable in the rear. He stopped the car and got out to knock at the side door. There was no response. He looked about for some sign of life. Some hundreds of yards away, off in the direction from which they had come, a man was repairing a fence at the farther side of a field.

"I think I'll go over there and ask him," the chauffeur said, pointing. "He seems to be the only one alive round here."

"May I come, too?" she asked, stepping out. "I want to hear what he says. These country people are always so funny, I like to talk to them."

He laughed and nodded, and they walked together across the field she stopping to pluck clusters of Autumn leaves as she went. The laborer, meanwhile, had gone on farther, and, before they could attract his attention, he was at least half way back to where the Axiom stood, hidden by the trees on the road. They reached the farmer at last and appealed to him for water.

"Why," he said, "there's a hydrant down that way, and a tin can near it, somewhere. I reckon you can get all the water you need there." He pointed still farther on, down by the road.

The two walked on, found the faucet and the tin. Having filled this receptacle, they started for the runabout. As they walked, there was a sound of puffing, evidently an automobile passing, but it was hidden from them by the trees. There was a stone wall to climb, he helping her, and she making a little scene of it, and then they brushed through a thicket of bushes and came out upon the road.

"Why, where is my car?" she exclaimed. "It ought to be right here, oughtn't it?"

"This is certainly the place," he answered looking up and down in perplexity.

"It's *gone!*" she exclaimed, in alarm.

"It must be here, somewhere! It couldn't get away of itself, and I don't see how anyone could start her without water. It can't fly, can it?"

"Don't joke! It's serious!" she exclaimed petulantly. "It must have been stolen. Don't you remember we heard an auto going by?" She seemed about to weep. "What shall I do?" she pleaded, turning anxiously to him.

DRAWN BY ANGUS MAC DONALL

The look on her face gave way to an expression of relief

He stood for a while gazing blankly about. "I don't see anything to do unless we take my car and go in search of yours," he said. "We can ride up and down and make inquiries, and if we don't find out any thing I'll take you home, and we'll report the case to the police."

"You've been awfully good," she returned. "And I suppose there's really no need worrying about it, but you see—I'd hate to have anything happen to my car—I've had it only two weeks, and I'm rather fond of it. Of course it isn't an expensive car like yours, but I couldn't afford to get another, just now."

"It was my fault," he protested. "I should have insisted on going for the water alone. But I think we'll find it all right. It may be just some kind of a joke. Let's walk up to my machine and then we'll chase over the country looking for yours."

They started off, at that, round the bend of the road together.

"We might go to the Country Club and telephone from there," he suggested. "I suppose you belong, don't you?"

"Yes—but I'd rather not go there."

"Afraid you'll be laughed at?"

"Yes—I can wait outside, can't I, while you go in?"

"I don't happen to be a member, but I expect I can fix it."

They came out of the long tunnel of trees to the end of the curve of the road. The house was in plain sight a little distance farther on.

"By Jove!" he ejaculated. "Where's my car?"

He started to run on ahead, leaving her to catch up at a fast walk. When she reached him, he was standing gazing up the road at a little cloud of dust far away.

"Where is it?" she asked.

"It's gone!" he cried. "What d'you think of that? Why, it's atrocious! There seems to be a regular gang of auto pirates round here, infesting the country. That must be them, now!" He pointed to the vanishing cloud of dust.

"I never heard of anything like it!" she replied. "How would they dare?"

He was silent, scowling, too angry to speak. Finally he broke out: "They can't sell it, anyway. It's a foreign car, and there's not another like it in New England. It will be like trying to hide an elephant. But it's a pretty state of things, if a man can't leave an auto on the road for fifteen minutes—"

"Or a girl a runabout—" she added.

He turned back to her. "Yes—I'd almost forgotten yours. It's a regular stampede, isn't it! They'll steal houses, next, and take 'em away while the owners are asleep! I expect we're in for a walk. It's a mile to the Country Club. We'll have to give the alarm there. Perhaps they'll organize a *posse* and scour the country, same as they do out West. Those fiends ought to be strung up! It's worse than horse-stealing."

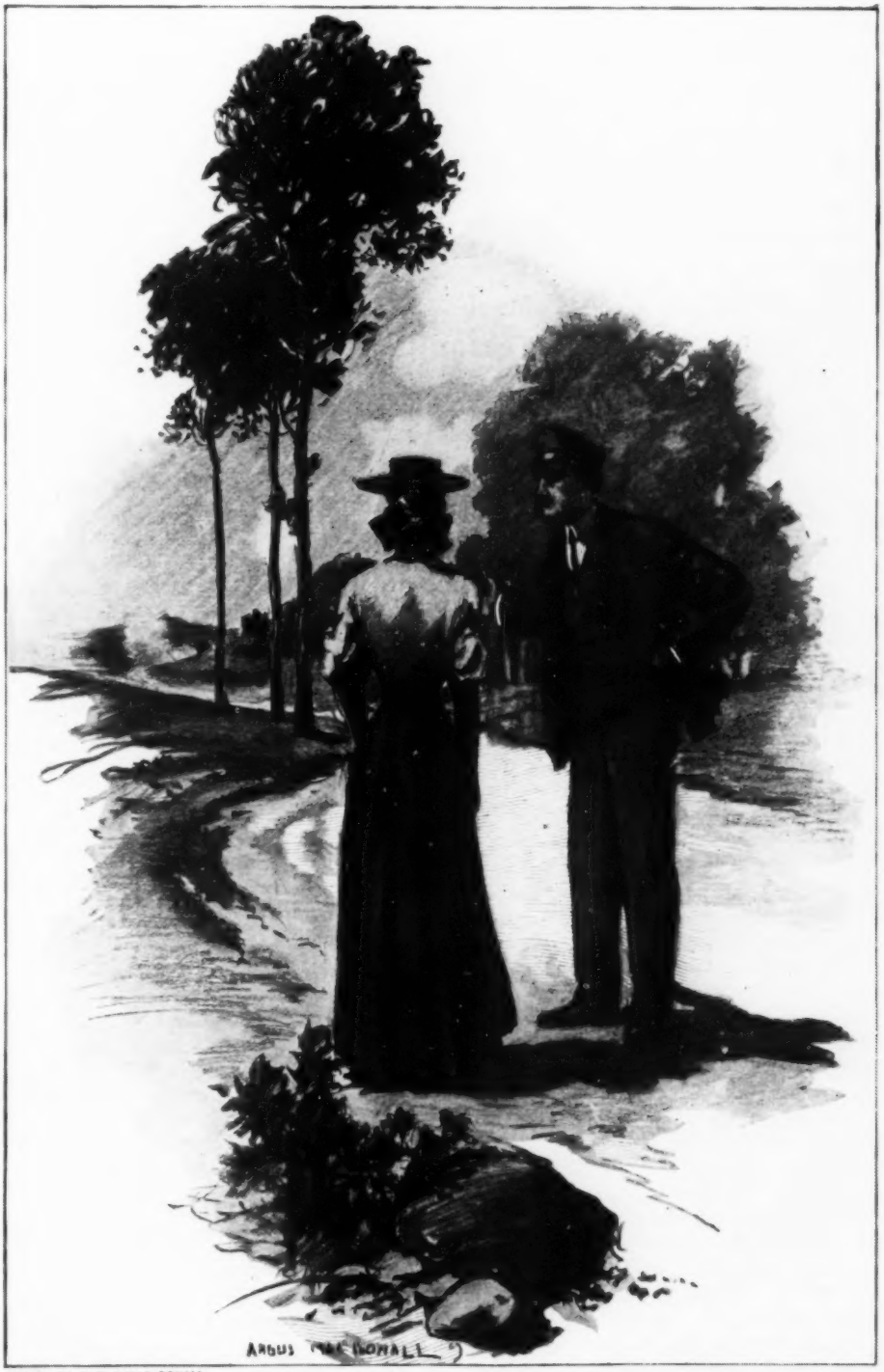
"If you were a detective," the girl said, "you could tell by the marks in the road which way they went, and what color their eyes were, and everything."

"Jove! I hadn't thought of that! Forthwith, he began to peer at the roadway, which was covered with a light film of dust, where many wheel tracks were hopelessly commingled.

"Here's where it turned into the road, and it went straight ahead," he said, following the tracks. "There's the mark of a shoe, but heaven only knows how long since it passed here. Why didn't the pirate drop his handkerchief or something for a clew? I thought they always did."

"What's that scrap of paper off there?" she asked, walking on a way. She reached it and picked it up and looked at it.

"Why, that's funny! It's your own name—"Mr. Herbert Mirchett!" Do you mean to tell me that you've stolen your own automobile?" She handed him the scrap.



DRAWN BY ANGUS MAC DONALL

"It's gone!" he cried. "What d'you think of that?"

He glanced at it and put it into his pocket. "Oh, I must have dropped that when I was here before," he said. He walked up the road alone, and came back with his hands in his pockets, as if resigned.

"It's a pity we didn't do some sleuthing down where your runabout was," he said.

"I didn't see anything there. But there may have been footprints, and we might have measured them. I believe that is the proper thing to do."

"There's one thing sure, Miss Ditmar, the person who stole your car knew a lot more about it than *you* did. He got away with it in pretty good shape for an amateur, anyway. It's too much for me. I'd like to know who it was. I can understand their taking mine, perhaps—she was in running order—but how did they get water into yours, and why?"

She suddenly grew pale. "Oh," she said, "I forgot! I was so excited that I quite forgot! What shall I do! I don't mind the loss of the car so much—but—there was a satchel under the seat with a case of jewels in it—I had just got it from the Safe Deposit Vaults. And they're gone, with the car!" She began to cry.

He whistled long and low. "That accounts for it, then," he said. "By jove, it *is* a mess! That's why they took the car—to get away with the jewels—probably they've been following you all day in some old steamer—I see—and then they took my car so that we couldn't chase them. It was a regular plot!"

She was moaning to herself, "How could I forget!—how *could* I!"

"Well," he said, "if it's any consolation for you to know it, I'm in somewhat of a hole, myself. That Excelsior wasn't my machine at all."

"Why!" she said, looking up through her tears, "it was registered in your name, wasn't it?"

"Only because the owner didn't want to perjure himself by swearing that he'd driven a hundred miles, that's all. By the way, how did you get your license?"

"I haven't one."

"That will make it rather embarrassing, when you go to the police, wont it?"

"I don't care, if I can only get the jewels back—they were not mine, either!"

He had to laugh, now. "We *are* in a scrape, aren't we!"

"I don't see how we'll ever get out of it. Let's disappear together!"

"Not much. I'm going after the thieves. We can walk to the Country Club. There's a 'bus from there back to the station. Let's go, before we lose too much time."

They set out, a disconsolate pair enough, up the road, in silence for a while. Then he said, with a new audacity:

"Anyway, there's one pleasant thing about it. We've got acquainted, Miss Ditmar. Of course you can refuse to know me, if you like, after it's all over, but now we're in the same boat, and we'd better make the best of it. We might never have met, otherwise."

"Why do you say that I'll refuse to know you—afterward?"

"Oh, well—we'll see—women don't care much for me, usually."

"It will lie entirely with you, Mr. Mirchett."

"Not at all—you'll cut me dead, I'm sure."

"I promise that I wont. You'll be the one to forget *me!* I know what you'll say about me!"

"Never! I'll promise, too."

"Then we're friends for keeps?" she asked, anxiously.

"If you're willing—but I wont hold you to it. We'll pretend now, though."

"All right. We'll see who goes back on the agreement first."

They kept up the straight road again in silence. He looked at her slyly, occasionally, and, when his eyes wandered, she looked as secretly at him. When their eyes at last met, they both laughed, like children. Then her face would cloud again, and he would recall his trouble.

DRAWN BY ANGUS MAC DONALL

"By jove!" he exclaimed, "isn't that your runabout?"

"Miss Ditmar," he said finally, "I've always heard that you were so eccentric —that's one reason I've always wanted to see you. But you don't seem to be so very different, after all."

"I'm sorry you're disappointed."

"But I'm not! It's quite the other way about!" he protested.

"Was my reputation so awful?"

"Only that you did rather gay things —original things, you know. I was a little afraid of you, I confess. But I like you better as you are."

"I suppose I ought to play up, but really, you know, I *am* worried!"

"Yes, of course. And your trying to drive a car without water was eccentric enough."

"But I had been out but twice before. And it's so different when you're alone from when you have a man with you to coach you every minute. I forgot so many things that I thought I knew."

"You ought to let me teach you."

"Are you sure you wouldn't try to flirt with me?"

"I wouldn't promise. Perhaps not, though; you say your man is afraid of you."

"You might practice on my maid."

"No, I'll let my chauffeur train her."

"Then what will become of my man?"

"You'd better get rid of him and take me on permanently."

"Are you going to Lenox this season?"

"I hope so—are you?"

"Yes. If I can get away. But I know you'll not want to know me."

"Nor you me."

"There we are again! I thought we had agreed to be friends."

"It depends upon you."

"That's just what *I* said."

They turned a curve of the road, and, a quarter of a mile before them the clubhouse stood, surrounded by trees, on a green, sloping lawn. Nearer by was a golf links, and on the other side of the road a polo grounds. Beside the fence there was a motor car, stopped. Its owner was apparently looking on at a game that was in progress. They both gazed at the car keenly.

"Why!" she exclaimed, "that's your car, isn't it?"

He looked long and hard. "Looks like it!" he said. Then he halted in the middle of the road, and looked at her.

"Why don't you go on and stop him? Quick, before he sees you!" she asked, wondering at his indecision.

He did not answer, till they had walked a little nearer. Then he stopped again.

"I'm afraid there'll be a scene," he said. "If there's going to be a fight, you had better wait here. You said you didn't want to go to the clubhouse, anyway."

"Oh, I'm going to see you through," she announced. "I can scream for help, at least."

He stood still, gazing at the car.

"I'm not sure it's mine," he said.

"Why, of *course* it is! Do you mean to say you're going to stand there calmly and let him run off with it again, Mr. Mirchett?"

"Miss Ditmar," he said, looking down at his feet, "I have a confession to make. I'm not Mr. Mirchett. That is Mr. Mirchett in the car, there."

"Who are you?" she demanded.

"I'm his chauffeur. Or rather I was. He undoubtedly came by with some one else, and saw the car standing there and took it. I was going to take it out to the Club for him. I suppose he'll discharge me, now."

"So you've been deceiving me all along, deliberately?" She looked him straight in the eye.

"Not at all. You've been deceiving yourself. I never said my name was Mirchett. You looked the number up in the book, and drew your own conclusions."

"But you allowed me to think so."

"Yes, I did. Well, it's all over now. I told you you'd be the one to end it, didn't I?"

"I didn't say it had ended yet."

"Do you mean that you are willing to know me—"

"You know I'm not at all satisfied with my own chauffeur."

"Would you engage me, if I lost my place?"

"We'll talk about that, later. I think you'd better go on and settle with Mr. Mirchett. I'll wait here."

"No, wont you come, too? You can

explain it, you know. Really, I have a good enough excuse, in having to help you. No doubt he'll help us find your car."

"Would you mind telling me what your name is, if it isn't Mirchett?" she asked, sweetly.

"It's Brilling. Henry Brilling."

By this time the occupant of the Excelsior, evidently tired of watching the game, had started his car. It rolled at an easy pace towards the Country Club, and turned into the lane.

"I'll have to go on and find him," said Brilling. "I'll explain it all, and I'm sure he'll be able to do something for you."

"Well, you go on and I'll wait for you here."

"Please come!"

"Mr. Brilling, you were right. I think, really, we'd better part company. I don't care to explain that I took you for Mr. Mirchett, you know. It might be embarrassing. I'll forgive you, and we'll part friends. Of course you understand that now—"

"I understand," he said, and, pulling off his cap, he started up the road alone. He had scarcely gone ten feet, however, before he stopped, and pointed towards the Club.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "isn't that your runabout coming this way? There's a girl in it! It must be your maid, after all—no one else would dare. Probably she came by and saw the car standing there!"

The girl's face had suddenly flushed again.

"Why, I do believe it is, isn't it? Well, then, it's all right! I do hope she has the jewels! Don't wait, Mr. Brilling, it will be all right, now, and I wont trouble you any further. Really, I wish you would go—I've bothered you so much, you know. I'll get her to take me back. I don't know how she could have been so stupid—aren't you going?"

"I think I'll wait and see if the jewels are safe," he said, his eyes on the approaching car.

"*Please* go on!" She stamped her foot impatiently.

"I prefer to wait, Miss Ditmar," he replied calmly.

In another moment the car was upon them, and had stopped suddenly. A young lady all in red silk, veil, gloves and duster, was at the wheel. She looked at the girl wonderingly and suddenly burst out laughing.

"Well, Marie," she said, "did you miss the car? Really, I couldn't help wanting to teach you a lesson. They told Francis at the *garage* that you had started out without water, and I know you'd be goose enough not to know what to do, so I came to look for you—think of your going off and leaving that case in the car! I brought Mr. Mirchett along, and we filled the tank with soda-water out of a case of siphons we were carrying out here. And then I thought I'd bring this machine in. What d'you think! Mr. Mirchett found his own car a little way farther on, and he brought it in, too, and Francis came on alone! It was too funny! Now get in, and I'll take you to the Club—I want you to get me ready to go to town. You weren't alarmed, were you? It was an awful joke on you but I couldn't resist it! Jump in, Marie, I'm in an awful hurry!"

The girl walked slowly to the car, waved a hand to Brilling and stepped in. Brilling took off his hat with an exaggerated manner. Miss Ditmar—the true Miss Ditmar—suddenly noticed him.

"Oh, I say," she called out, "are you Mr. Mirchett's chauffeur?"

He approached the car. "Yes, ma'am," he said.

"Well, I've had lots of bother with my man, and Mr. Mirchett said that if you were willing, he'd let me have you. Would you like the job? I have only two cars—a Matchless and this. I'd like to get a good reliable man very much. The one I have spends all his time flirting with Marie, here. Will you come?"

"I'd be glad to, Miss Ditmar," said Brilling.

"Well, come up to the Club, then—I'll want you to take Marie home—I don't dare to trust her with this machine again. You wont let her go off and leave it, will you?"

"No, ma'am," said Brilling.

DRAWN BY JOHN W. NORTON

The little rider sitting his horse so bravely beside the fire

The Toy Amansador

BY F. L. STEALEY

Author of "A Placard at Tender John's," etc.

CIRCLE-DOT was the horse brand of the *Patron*. And the round corral of the *caballada*, with its snubbing post in the center, seemed another circle-dot marking his absolutism on the pastoral Spanish grant.

Like a brand on the shoulder, it showed high on the bare slope above the *acéquia*. The sun, coming over the Sierra, struck it first of all in the valley and set it apart in a sort of wild glory, while the long fenceless stretch of alfalfa below it lay dewy and glistening-green in the subdued bottom.

Sun-up! The Sierra's snow began to be touched as with fire. The corral was yet in shadow, and a cloud of dust hid the tops of the tall cedar pickets, held in place by a double strip of rawhide woven about them and shrunk to iron. The closed barway was all obscured, and from within came snuffling, and coughing, and the hurried trample of many hoofs going their prisoned round in the cloud of their own making.

Juan Bautista, the *amansador*, with a lively step, circled short about the snubbing post. His brown hand, patrician-perfect, disdainful of labor, retained lightly the slender rope of plaited rawhide, while his practised wrist, steel-like and slim, whirled the loop over his head to catch his mount for the day. Seated on the top bar, his *compañero*, who helped with the herd, looked down in approval on him.

His eyes were on the *alazan* horse, running the outer circle of the corral against the pickets. Twice the wary beast had run it, his head ducked low behind the quarters of the nervous *yeguas*. Now, the *yegua parda* lifted her hind hoof viciously under his jaw; his head flew up—and instantly was caught in the roper's throw. Feeling its tightening jerk, down went his head again, while he bucked and bawled, betraying his bronco blood.

"Ca-ball-o! ca-ballo diablo!" Juan Bautista's shriek rose, long-drawn and exultant, as, with a turn of the rope about his hips, he was jerked stiff-legged around the corral, his *zapatos* ploughing up the dust. He swung about the snubbing post and, slacking the rope, instantly flipped it dexterously over the post;

and, holding it easily as the post took the strain, he stood, breathing hard, his mouth tight shut, the thin, stiff hairs on his upper lip projecting threateningly under his nose, curved like a gavilan's beak, and his hard hawk eyes watching his captive choke down.

The *alazan,* striking savagely at the strangling rawhide, "set back;" his throat-latch was contracted to half its circumference, slowly his wheezing grew loud; his hind legs doubled up, his quarters drooped, his out-planted fore legs trembled under him; slowly he leaned sideways—too slowly, for the horse-tamer with an impatient push of his *zapato* on the withers sent the stubborn one over on his side.

Instantly Juan Bautista was kneeling on the down-one's neck; the *jaquima* was adjusted over his head, its noose on his nose; the cruel port of the Spanish bit was forced between his closed teeth, its barbarous curb ring encircled his jaw, the headstall of the bridle, with its gay silver *conchas,* was slipped past his slim pointed ears and the throat-latch drawn snug and buckled.

Then the *amansador* eased the loop of his rope through the *honda* and kicked the *alazan* to his feet, his right hand, as the horse rose, deftly drawing down the blind pendant from the brow-band, and the *alazan,* in complete and incomprehensible darkness, stood still and trembled.

The saddle lay ready at the snubbing post, the gorgeous blanket outspread upon it. Juan Bautista adjusted the blanket to a nicety on the short back, smoothing out every wrinkle in its many folds. Holding the *jaquima* in his left hand, he seized the saddle by the horn in his right and swung it aloft in a wide arc; and with a clap, and a slap of its dangling cinch, the fifty-pound saddle descended to its place on the *alazan's* hogged back. The end of the forty-strand cinch was seized underneath, the long latigo strap passed thrice through the cinch ring, and with a foot braced against the *alazan's* ribs, Juan Bautista drew tight the cinch and knotted the strap in the ring of the support. He made a neat coil of his slim rope, tied it to the saddle shoulder, mounted and, leaning forward in his stirrups, reached over and lifted the blind.

Meantime, his helper was at the barway. The seasoned spruce poles now rang in rapid dropping; and from the dust-shrouded corral's cloud, the pent *caballada* flashed forth and thundered down to the Rio to water. Behind them, the *amansador,* gallant in flying frippery, quirted the *alazan* through the barway; his helper, mounted, took his place at his side, and the pair pitched down the hoof-worn slope.

Now the sun burst clear of the Sierra and made the Rio under it dazzling to their eyes; and, sweeping away the shadow, turned the alfalfa's green gloom into a stretch of gorgeous purple bloom, that marked it ready for the cutting.

As the *caballada* struck the Rio, and scattered along its sloping bank, pawing and splashing in the water, Juan Bautista, dismounted to await the watering of the herd, saw the *Patron* in his morning inspection about the *rancho,* ride along the *acéquia,* where he stopped to note the alfalfa's blooming and also the watering of the stock. Likewise, for his eyes went everywhere, he noted the white sheet of a camper's wagon showing over the underbrush, at the upper edge of the cottonwood clump, across the Rio, above the ford.

Presently, Juan Bautista, observing the *Patron,* saw him start his horse and cross the ditch at the corner of the alfalfa and strike into the road leading down to the ford; and watched him as he turned from it and advanced to him through the sage brush in the uncultivated bottom above the road.

"Hola! Juan Bautista," the *Patron* called in a crashing roll of Mexican *patois,* "thou hast the eyes of a *gavilancillo*—tell me, who is that over there across the Rio?"

"It is a stranger, *Patron,* an American," replied the Mexican, with a fitting distinction in addressing an *Americano* who had married the Mexican heiress of this lordly Spanish grant. And he added with a further dignifying title: "He has been camped there for some time, Don."

Juan Bautista, indeed, knew this very well. He had several times ridden along the road across the river by the strange American's camp and seen the man, his woman and their lonely little boy, with whom he had cultivated a smiling acquaintance and for whom he "played circus" on the *alazan* horse, as he passed: no, not played, it was the real, true thing; for, if in his cumbering leather breeches and trailing spurs he was, afoot, somewhat short stepping like a sparrow-hawk, in the saddle, lo! he took wing. And here, too, he was resplendent with his spurs wrought by a silver worker of La Santa Fè and his huge, gay hat with its silver tinsel band, just stuck on his hair with the dash and bravado of a true *Chihuahueño.*

Now while the *Patron* looked across the river, Juan Bautista, knowing about the woman and the child, further explained: "He waits without doubt, *señor,* for the Rio to fall before he ventures the ford."

"Waits! with much snow in the mountains and the flood yet to come!" and the *Patron* looked not at the Rio, but at the Sierra that ruled its rising tide. "Waits!" he repeated. *"Carajo!* and so does the alfalfa! The Rio is getting a little risky —but the alfalfa burns. Ride over, *muchacho,* and pilot him across, for we need hay pitchers."

The *Patron,* that grizzled adventurer, was given to taking chances—and winning out; and the horse-breaker staked life against a silver *peso* every day in the saddle. His right hand gripped the saddle horn, his left foot, in its flexible *zapato,* was hooked in the stirrup, when the voice of the *Patron* stayed him.

"'Sperate, Juan Bautista," and he lifted the hand that held his cornhusk *cigarro* while smoke shot from his haughtily curved nostrils. "Thou knowest the ford, *muchacho*—none better. Have good care then and bring to me this American safely. To-morrow we begin to cut the *vega,* and, as you know, these wayfarers from the states are *diablos* to pitch in the field. *Vaya!"*

The *amansador* settled in the saddle and, leaning forward, lifted the blind. The *Patron* saw him rise with the pitch of the *alazan,* his quick spurs played, and easy on his smooth little horse, he went skimming like a sparrow-hawk along the sage brush. In a moment his crimson scarf was flapping above the wheel tracks leading to the ford; and the *Patron,* turning away, rode on in his inspection, while Juan Bautista's *compañero* started the horses for their grazing ground.

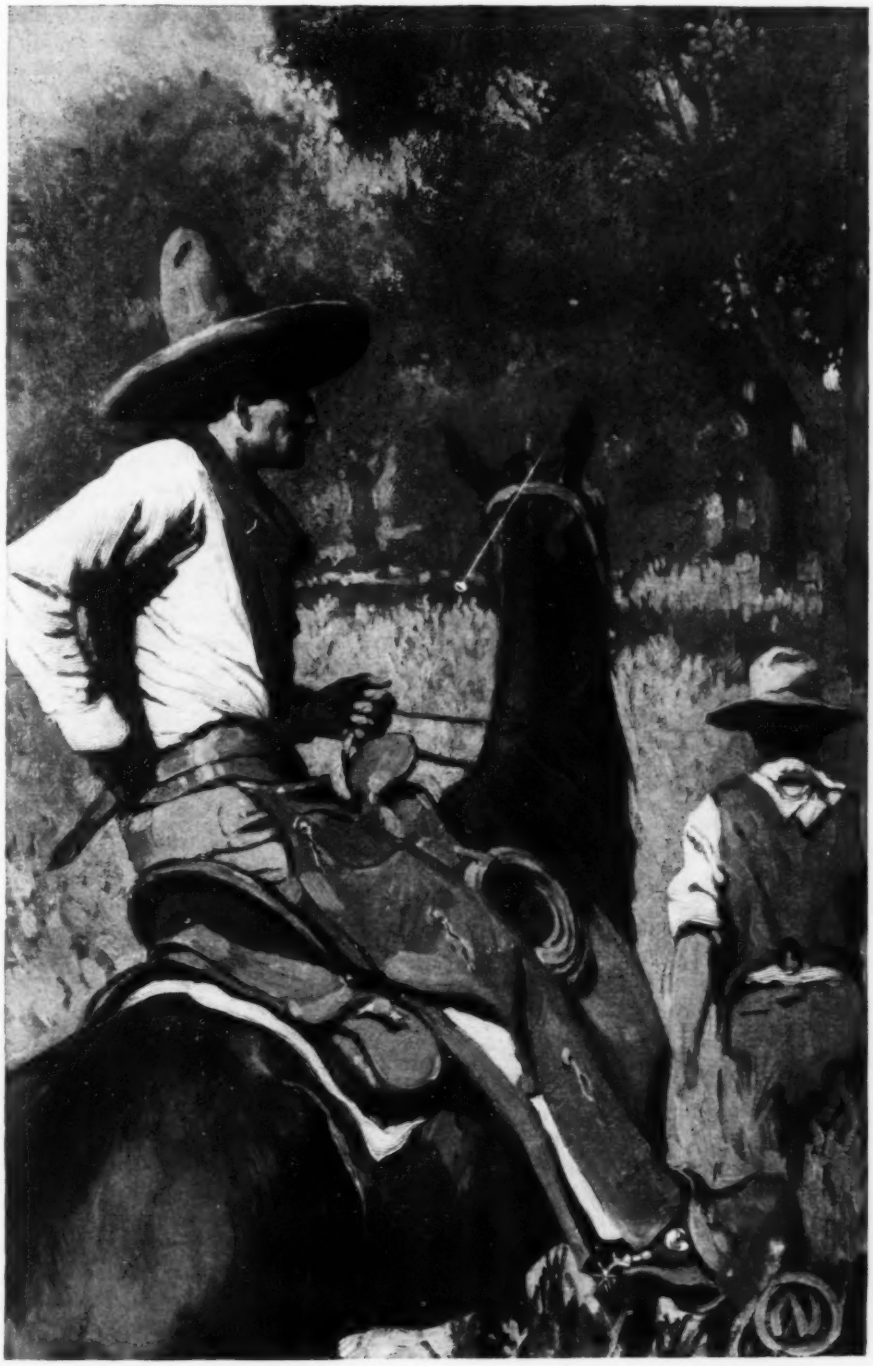
At the water's edge, the *amansador* halted and dismounted to slacken his broad single cinch for his horse's easier swimming, for he well knew that the tricky current scoured insidious, deep holes. Again in the saddle, he struck in to the ford where the withy *alazan* floundered through the miry shallows of the slack water, breasted the mid-current, swam half a dozen strokes, and, agile as a water rat, slid out beyond to shortly emerge and stand, rat-tailed and dripping, on the sandy slope of the ford below the cottonwood clump.

There the *amansador* again dismounted and drew tight the *latigo* strap, while trickles ran from the drooping points of his stirrups' *tapaderos.* He stopped to kick the water from his leather breeches and stamp it through the yielding sinew-stitched seams of his soaked *zapatos;* and when he again got into the saddle, he saw the camper, who had witnessed his passage from the edge of the cottonwoods, come running to intercept him.

"That little sorrel horse is sure a high swimmer," he said admiringly, greeting the *amansador.* "Blamed if his withers even went under with you an' that there heavy saddle on him! An' say, you sure savvy this here darn river. An' I want you to pilot me across, for I 'low I'll try it to-day."

He was a big man, *un hombron;* his praise of the horse was loud and his boisterous voice rose still higher to make his last words storm their way to the Mexican's comprehension; he thrust his thick thumb against his breast, swept his huge hand open to his camp, shook it limber at horse and rider, and pointed rigidly across the river.

His words were but little understood by the Mercury of the *Patron;* but he nodded a ready assent to these ursine gestures. *"Si, señor,"* he added in words



DRAWN BY JOHN W. NORTON

"*Tonto!*" he reproved his clumsy thought

also uncomprehended by the camper; *"el Patron lo dijo."* It was the fiat of the *Patron;* also, it was well to have this *hombron* fall in so opportunely with the humor of the *Patron.*

The camper seized the chance to back up his resolution.

"I'll jest strike back for camp an' hump myself to get hooked up. An' I say, here!" He drew out a little tobacco-sack purse from his overalls' pocket; mostly gold pieces slipped out with the smaller silver and the camper's careless fingers set them aside in his big sweaty hand and again tilted the sack.

"Muchas riquezas!" The horse-tamer leaned from the saddle to gaze on these carelessly outpoured riches. And in a tumult of temptation, he saw himself with the gold in the *cantanas* of his saddle, a rider with the wind, a quaffer of *aguardiente, un caballero galan* among the shawled *señoritas* of the Border's mud-towns.

"Here!" Selecting two silver dollars the camper paid his pilot's fee in advance.

Juan Bautista tucked them in the folds of his red *faja* knotted tightly about his gaunt middle. Suspended from it, at his right hip, hung the sheath of his heavy knife with a cord-wound handle and a two-edged blade hammered from a ten-inch file. And as the camper, after motioning for the rider to take the road around the thicket that bordered the river, turned to break through it straight for his camp, the eyes of the *amansador* centered that carelessly turned and tempting back.

It was but a leap of his horse to the spurs and, leaning forward, a thrust. He lifted his horse's head with the reins, his nervous fingers tightened on the cord-roughened handle at his hip—and quickly relaxed. *"Tonto!"* he reproved his clumsy thought. *"'Sperate! Soy el piloto: el Rio es el mejor."*

Already he saw the struggle in the water and the gold in his saddle pockets and himself on the trail to Chihuahua—and drove in his spurs. So speedily did he go, that the camper had not accomplished half the passage of the thicket when the rider, covering the road around it, neared his camp and saw his team of big hollow-flanked Percheron horses picketed by reluctant necks in a scantily grassed space of the bottom.

Placed so as to overlook the team, and also to be convenient to the water, the camper's wagon stood in the shade of the upper cottonwoods—giant survivors of many a flood, whose network of roots had held the bend against the ever-biting current.

The wagon-sheet, stretched on the high boughs, screened from the rider the spot of sacredness where fire still smoked, not yet burned out from morning. The *alazan* horse shied at the sheet, his light hoofs soundless in the swash of the current hitting the bend and the ceaseless cooing of the multitudinous doves that nested in the thicket; and Juan Bautista, unheard, forced him around the wagon and checked him in silence at what he saw there.

Under the big cottonwood bulwarking the bank, a woman knelt with her back to him. Her sun-bonnet hung from her neck by the strings, and her curly hair was down. She looked very girlish—yet Juan Bautista knew her for the mother—and she seemed at play. For before her, under the cottonwood, was a tiny circular corral of little, rough, cedar pickets, set in the ground and lashed around their tops with cord; a miniature, indeed, of that one plainly visible on the slope across the Rio. The little pole bars were up, Juan Bautista, childishly curious, noticed; and inside was corralled the *caballada,* rough small bronchos, fashioned of cottonwood bark, with stout stubby legs, twig ears, and lavishly luxuriant tails of raveled cord. At the snubbing post stood the pick of the bunch, saddled and much accoutered, and in the saddle Juan Bautista saw a toy *amansador* sitting jauntily.

The Mexican gazed for a moment at this play picture—a sort of pantomime made plain by the melancholy cooing of the brooding doves—and understood. Homesick girl-mother and lonely little boy had constructed all this between them. But where *was* the *muchachito?*

The *amansador* looked about and set his hawk face in a smile to greet properly

that chance playmate, whom he had not seen for almost a week. He could not discover him anywhere; and then the mother rose and turned to him, and he knew instantly where the child had gone.

One look at her face and Juan Bautista divined it—and divined, also, that, knowing she was going to leave the spot, she had knelt in farewell over the play corral and the prisoned *caballada,* that waited in vain for the bars to be let down by their little master who did not come.

Juan Bautista's look followed her, as stepping by him almost as if she saw him not, she walked across the narrow bottom to the lone cedar, at the foot of the bluff. He saw the little mound there, pathetically short, and vivid with mountain wild flowers, fresh-gathered.

"La flor, la flor!" murmured Juan Bautista, his hand on his *reliquia;* "the flower of a day—and the frost of a night." To witness the girl-mother's grief at the grave was trying; and he looked aside as she knelt, heart-broken at the thought of going away to leave it there so lonely and so lost in that spot of desolation.

But wailing is for woman; work for man. He was roused to the exigencies of life by the camper, bursting bull-like from the thicket with the resilient brush switching from his heedless shoulders.

He glanced in passing at the play corral and brushed his hand roughly across his eyes without pausing. Stepping up to the little *alazan* horse he laid a hand on his withers and, leaning back, measured the height with his eyes. "Most o' the way it worn't no deeper than here," he muttered and gazed critically at his long legged Percherons. And then his look fell and rested tenderly and anxiously on the girlish figure at the grave, and was finally turned, mutely questioning, up to the horse-tamer's dare-devil face, while for the hundredth time the ford and the dread of it were weighed in his undecided mind.

"Quien sabe, señor," Juan Bautista made answer to that look. And again he said: *"Lo dijo el Patron"*—a fiat fateful that weighted the scale for the camper.

He started at once for the picketed horses. The *amansador,* awaiting his preparations, dropped the blind over his horse's eyes, rolled a pinch of tobacco in a corn husk, and, leaning back over the cantle with an elbow on the *alazan's* hip, blew smoke from his nostrils the while he ruminated on this affair of the ford.

It took some time to break camp. After the horses were brought in, they must be harnessed, and their picket ropes coiled and flung in the wagon. The grub box must be packed; and all the scattered belongings of the camp must be gathered: the ax sticking in the hacked log, the shovel lying by the ashes, the sunken sack of flour drooping against the tree trunk, the limp chunk of salt-side hanging on the sharpened stub above it, the bake-oven, the frying-pan, the coffee-pot —all were mentally enumerated and placed in the wagon. Then the camper stood at the front wheel and looked about to see that nothing had been forgotten—and, intent on material things, overlooked the most precious object there.

The team was hooked up, and Juan Bautista sat on the *alazan* at their heads while the camper went over to the cedar to bring his woman. For him, there was still always just ahead the illusory paradise of his fatuous quest; and for her—by how many far camping-places would she see that lonely little grave?

Something of this he doubtless realized for he was tender of her and lifted her, as if she were a child, to the high spring seat. He put a foot on the hub, clambered up beside her, and unwrapped the lines from the brake handle; but when he would have started the team, she laid a restraining hand on his arm, and, looking down at what he had forgotten, she, unable to speak, motioned with her hand to the play corral. Before the driver could climb down, the *alazan* horse made a step and stopped with a front hoof at the Lilliputian barway and Juan Bautista, swinging from the saddle, lifted and placed in her childishly outheld hands, the centaur of the little corral, the toy *amansador* on his sprightly sorrel horse.

"Vamos!" cried the Mexican, putting his mount to the front. The driver threw

off the brake, hiked to his team, and they swung out to the road.

Juan Bautista led the way down past the cottonwood clump, where the wheel-tracks turned with a dip to enter the river; and there, while the pilot straightened in the saddle and became intent on the ford, the wagon, coming on behind, unexpectedly stopped. For the driver was used to the plains' fainting creeks and bland meeting of the sky, and his heart faltered at the immediate sight of that wide and wild torrent spewed from imprisoning savage mountains.

Juan Bautista, at the water's edge, noting his hesitation, gazed at him with a sardonic smile. The driver straightened his cramped leg to admit his hand to his overalls' pocket and, drawing it out, beckoned the rider close to the near front wheel.

"Here, I want you to take this acrosst for me," he said, holding out the little sack of coin. "We may have to swim for it, an' on that little hawse you got jest twice the chancet."

Juan Bautista, who made not much of knifing a man, had not been untouched by that flower-covered little grave, and on his face as he saw the sack, consternation chased surprise at the camper's trusting action.

He held in his horse, yet threw up his hand as if to push the sack away. *"Tentacion del demonio!"* he shrieked. *"No!"*

The American could imagine no cause for his hesitation.

"Here, take the sack quick," he said with tone and manner calculated to end the affair; and Juan Bautista, feeling the finger of fate in all this, received the lank little purse in his trembling, eager, hand and placed it in the *cantanas* of his saddle. But before he could fasten the flap over it, the woman's voice caused him to lift his eyes, with his fingers on the buckle.

"Please take this, too," she said, her voice plaintively persuasive. And Juan Bautista reached out to receive from her hand the toy *amansador*. Placing it in the saddle pocket above the gold, he buckled the flap securely over both.

The *alazan* horse entered the ford, plugging staunchly through miry shallows of the slack water, while with noses at his tail, the Percherons strained and floundered; and when they hung back and slackened a tug, the camper rose and hiked them with his blacksnake. The wheeling grew easier and the water hub-deep, but always the driver must keep the lines ready tight to turn quickly after the rider, twisting now up stream, now down.

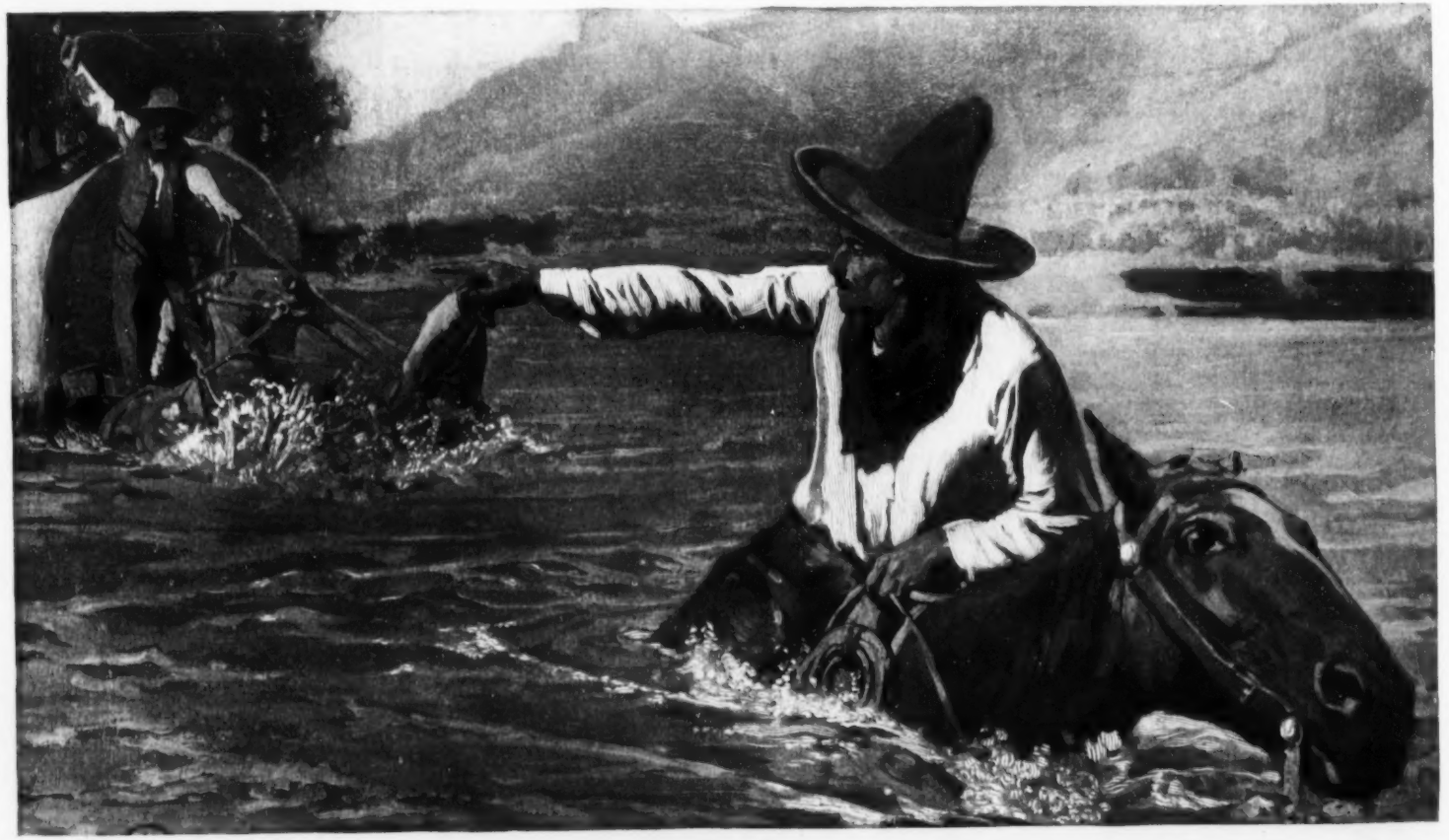
Some times the pilot had the sun, now grown high, at his shoulder and could see ahead the fascinating circling of a suck, or the water's long sleek, insidious glide over an abysmal hole, to be shunned with a timely turn; sometimes his diagonal advance was more nearly under the sun and the river became an endlessly wimpling web of dazzlement from which he must blindedly pick the hidden thread of the ford.

The deepening water presently rose to his knees bent by the stirrups, and lapped at the bellies of the tall reluctant horses feeling their slow way behind. The current drew near, for seemingly it moved to meet them, and the pilot felt the water's chilling pressure at his thighs, felt the motion of his horse unexpectedly change from wading to swimming. He asked himself, was he at fault? or was it truly the tricky current swinging to meet them? He turned and looked backward up-stream at tree and bush along the bank.

His eyes resting in relief upon the greenery, caught a trembling of the foliage lining the high bank fronting the abandoned camp. Thinking it the dance of the water in his vision, he pressed his eyes with his fingers and looked again. He had seen truly, the huge outer cottonwoods there were plainly trembling, were already leaning, cut under by the treacherous current that was shifting, also, below them.

He saw the blanched ruffling of their troubled leaves as they bowed, saw the multiple splash and heard the crash of their fall.

"La caballada en el corralito!" cried the *amansador*, with a whimsical pang at the fate of the *caballado* shut fast in the toy corral. But this was no time for sen-



DRAWN BY JOHN W. NORTON

He yelled and pointed to the oncoming drift

timent, for the fallen trees, seized instantly by the current, were driving down swiftly upon them. Forward, before that trapping tangle caught them in the current, was their only chance. He turned and beckoned the driver on.

"Presto, presto!" he shouted to hasten him; and by inspiration flung back a command caught from the lips of the imperious *Patron*: "Damn queek!" he yelled and pointed to the oncoming drift, where the huge trunks drove, some sidelong, some root end on, some top first, in a wide and threatening tangle.

The driver rose and "put the buckskin" to his clumsy phlegmatic horses. Juan Bautista seconded his efforts to hasten them, slashing with his quirt the off horse, the slower one of the team. Somewhat quickened, they entered the current and the water, striking against their sides, swashed back and over their great bony hips. But the Percherons were staunch, and their mountainous ponderosity held their big feet securely on the bottom, and they plodded mightily on while the wagon partly floating, slewed down stream. Juan Bautista, his little horse also afloat now, passed back behind and, leaning from the saddle, threw his weight on the box to hold it in the standards.

It was a moment of excitement; the driver's whole attention was on his team and the threatening tangle that passed so close the boughs lashed the hind endgate. By a scratch the wagon escaped.

The pilot's part was done. They were safe. For the Percherons, if slow, were mighty and steadily drew on into the shallow water. Then the driver, missing the rider, looked back over the sheet to see what had become of him. But he saw only the trees in a tremendous tangle of huge trunks and slimy roots and heaped green boughs driving down the Rio, already below the ford.

It was evident that the *alazan* and his rider had been caught by the drift. And with a heart heavy at the loss, not of the gold but of the man, the camper drove on and gained the solid bank.

There he followed the road to the *placita*. At that time of day only the women and children and a few helpless old men were about the little Mexican hamlet, and to these uncomprehending ones he vainly tried to detail the catastrophe. But the recital, he found, must wait, until the return of the *Patron*.

The *alazan* was a musquash in the water; and the *amansador* was snaky, and furthermore, tempered by a reckless calling to spring sharply to the chance.

Just far enough ahead of the drift for safety, yet close enough for concealment, the pair went with the current down past the bend that hid them from all above, and there made for the bank.

In the uncleared bottom below the alfalfa the grease-wood was thick and high, screening the rider completely from any chance passer on the road, as he bowed in the saddle and rode on.

A mile below, the bottom narrowed and the bluff, bending to meet it, was well set with cedars and *piñones* that ran back on the *mesa*. Once among these thick evergreens he sat again erect in the saddle.

His gait now was easy. He had escaped unseen; all would think him drowned—and the Rio was usually long in giving up its victims. He was on his way to Chihuahua with the gold in his saddle pockets, placed there by the lavish hand of fate—that had thrust in also, as if for good measure, the toy *amansador*.

He kept well off the road and did not stop at noon but rode steadily on. Late in the afternoon, crossing a shallow tributary of the Rio, he watered his horse; and at sundown he made a dry camp in a little park in the dense *piñones*, thick set with gramma grass. Here he unsaddled and, taking off the bridle, picketed his horse with his lass-rope, then, night falling, made his little fire for light.

He had nothing to cook, but there were half a dozen *tortillas de maiz* and a strip of jerked beef in the pocket of the *cantanas* opposite the gold. He drew the saddle near the light and, producing the food, ate abstemiously.

Restlessness came over him. The night was moonless and the *mesa* lonesome to the gay *amansador*. He made the fire

bright with the dried boughs of a fallen *piñon;* and squatting by his saddle, opened the saddle pocket and took out the gold—first removing the little *amansador* and standing the horse on his legs, with his rider erect in the saddle, by the fire.

He poured the coins out of the sack and counted them. There were ten tens and twenty fives—gold pieces—besides some small silver that he disdained to count. He stacked the gold in two piles, each size of coin to itself; and they twinkled brightly enticing to his eyes in the light of the fire—so much so that he hummed a gay *cantito* visioned with three-card *monte, aguardiente,* and *las muchachas.*

He rose and jingled his spur-bells to the air; and his eyes fell upon the little rider sitting his horse so bravely, beside the fire. To pass the time, he picked up the toy and, bending to the light, examined the horse, curiously and admiringly.

Its body was artistically shaped of thick, easily-whittled cottonwood bark; and its legs, fashioned almost perfectly even to fetlock and hoof, were fastened to its body with stout pins, making flexible joints. Its little slim ears were pointed. Its flaxen tail and mane were of raveled cord, and the horse's color was *alazan!* Juan Bautista gazed with wonder from it to its larger living counterpart grazing within the circle of the firelight at the end of the picket rope.

Then, with an almost childish interest, the *amansador* examined the saddle. It was a solid fork, whittled out and covered with russet leather, like his own. The little coiled rope was tied at the shoulder, the cinch was broad to hold it securely and there were long strings to tie a rolled *serape* behind the cantle.

And then the real *amansador* looked at the toy one. The little figure wore cumbering leather breeches, a fine linen *camisa* and a gorgeous crimson silk scarf. His gay, high hat was cutely cut and had a silver corded band; and underneath its brim a fierce black mustache was charcoaled on the carved face. Little wire spurs were on his feet shod in new buckskin *zapatos;* his red worsted sash half hid the sheath of a cunningly carved hard-wood knife, and his quirt swung from his right wrist.

It was indeed a marvel of imitation, a fancy that admiration alone could have inspired and love given the patience to execute. A softened light began to tremble on the *amansador* and in it he saw himself somewhat as the child had seen him, to whom he had been the one bright pageant of that lonely little life.

In this new view the *amansador* set the tiny figure back near the fire and studied the miniature of himself on the *alazan.* At first look, it seemed like an image, diminished and lifeless however true, as if he gazed at himself in a magic mirror. Gradually it grew more lively upon his fancy; it was his diminutive self and yet distinct and independent, as if he saw it through a telescope reversed, very small but clear and strange in a mysterious farness, giving it a quality almost eerie.

In a way it was as if he looked upon his *better* self, turned a child's playmate, small and far removed as child from man. And in this degree it became imbued with life, for under his visioning eyes the tireless little rider appeared to limber himself in the saddle and flip the tail of his quirt, as sentient as ever toy to child.

After a long hesitation, the *amansador* reached out his hand to pick up the coins. And then, to a heart awakened and an imagination afire, a curious thing happened; the toy *amansador* seemed to strike spurs to his horse and with a dash intervene himself between that reaching hand and the glinting gold. The fire had burned very low and Juan Bautista, thinking his eyes at fault, thrice repeated the gesture and each time found his fingers intercepted by the tiny rider.

These things Juan Bautista was wont to attribute to the hand of fate—a hard hand indeed to quicken the toy *amansador,* compared to the dead, tender hand of its little *Patron.*

With a shrug and a quick look about, Juan Bautista rose and resolutely saddled his horse. He took the back trail. When he neared the *placita* he heard the first cock crow. It was yet dark and over

the Sierra's snow he saw the morning star trembling. Under it, the camper's sheeted wagon, drawn up outside the *adobe* wall, loomed large.

He dropped from his horse, opened his saddle pocket, and, in his soundless, soft *zapatos*, stole up to the front of the wagon, like a thief in the night.

It happened that the camper had placed his wagon with the tongue to the East. The sun, flaming over the Sierra, shone in the opening of the gathered sheet, under the front bow's arch, and awakened from her dreams of a camp across the Rio the woman lying on the bed within.

Rising, she gave a wondering cry, for there, on the spring seat, astride his horse, and with all his tinsel and silk resplendent in the first burst of sunlight, sat the toy *amansador*. He was proudly erect for he had brought with him the little sack of gold lashed securely on behind his cantle, quite as if a child's hand had tied it there.

The Amansador

In the Dark

BY C. E. HUGHES

Author of "The Hermit," etc.

AT length, Lieutenant Von Wienitz raised his chin from his hands, withdrew his elbows from the table, and leaning forward, blew out the second candle.

He stared at the glowing tip of the wick, waiting for the red to die away.

"The thing will be easy enough to do in perfect darkness," he said half aloud.

What a long time the spark seemed to live—incredibly long. He could have sworn that the point of light pricked his vision for fully five minutes. In reality, perhaps, five seconds would have been nearer the truth.

The red glow vanished, and there was darkness.

The lieutenant stretched out his hand to the spot on which he had placed the revolver. He grasped it and drew it towards him.

"Quite easy now," he repeated, as he lifted the weapon from the table. "Darkness, after all, is one's best friend—perfect darkness. It doesn't let a man look so like a murd—"

What was that? The room was dark, and yet he had seen something—seen something almost as one hears a sound. A short, dull line of light before his very eyes! He extended a finger of his left hand. It touched the barrel of the revolver and he withdrew it with a slight

shudder. Now he could see the dim outline of the gleaming metal as his right hand held it.

"And yet," he reasoned hazily, as one who has drunk deep, "the room is dark. I blew out the candle myself. One cannot see in the dark. The thing is uncanny."

He laid the revolver on the table determined to wrestle with this problem, glad, in spite of himself, of an excuse to leave for an instant the other matter—the thing which must be done, and which darkness would make so easy.

He gazed hard at the table. There, sure enough, was the revolver. It was growing more and more clearly visible each moment. And there, beside it, was the candlestick, and the candle—the one he had blown out last; he could see them just as if it had been broad daylight. And the other candlestick a foot or two away; and the writing-pad on the table between the pair.

He must speak to the *concierge* about these candles. What was the use of candles which still lighted the whole room when they were blown out? Well, perhaps he was unjust. Not quite the whole room. He could hardly see the wall in front of him. The picture—Hobbema's "Avenue"—that was blurred, so perhaps, after all, the candles were all right. But no; he could see the picture. There was the long double row of trees, with the road stretching away up the landscape. All clear as day. Yes, he must certainly speak about the candles.

And yet, where was the good? When he had got through with that little easy matter he wouldn't have to worry about candles. Still, doubtless someone else would want his rooms, and he, whoever he might be, ought to be warned about these cursed candles which wouldn't blow out, or at least wouldn't stop illuminating when they were blown out. He should have to lodge a complaint about them for the benefit of the man who came after him. It was plainly his duty.

He looked about him. Good heavens! Why he could see every single thing in the room! There was the great stove in the corner, with its flue-pipe towering up to the ceiling; the book-case with the books all distinct as—why these confounded candles were regular searchlights. There was the bottom row with the tattered paper-backed novels and books of verse—French, a good many of them. He rather liked French novels. They were more lively than German. And yet he had quite enjoyed that last little thing of Bierbaum's. There it was at the end of the row. *Gott im Himmel!* what candles!

And there was the wardrobe, and his bed, and his cloak and sword on the peg by its side. He hoped they wouldn't forget to bury those with him. Strictly, of course, he wouldn't be entitled to military honors, but he had no doubt they would make an exception for him. He was going to do it for the sake of the regiment—he had made that quite clear in the letter. At least he thought so. Perhaps he had better be sure. He could read it well enough with these infernal candles.

He picked up the written sheet from the blotting-pad.

"I have done this," he read, "because military etiquette left me no other alternative but disgrace, and the disgrace of one officer of a regiment is the disgrace of every officer of the regiment."

He paused and considered the phraseology. "Yes, I think that's rather well put. The repetition of the word 'regiment' seems to add dignity and emphasis to it."

He read on.

"These are the facts of the case. I give them, so far as I remember, exactly as they occurred. To-day I entered a tram on Haupt-Strasse. The first seat on the left was occupied by a stout fellow in civilian dress. His legs extended slightly into the gangway. I tripped on them, and fell almost into the lap of a lady opposite."

"'*Dummkopf!*' I muttered to the man, 'Can't you keep your blamed legs to yourself.'"

"He rose and struck me on the mouth with the back of his hand. I grasped the hilt of my sword. He took, very deliberately, a card from his pocket-book, and handing it to me left the tram. I read the card—'General Von Ehrenberg-

Achstein.' I had insulted an officer of superior rank! He could not call me out, and accordingly but one thing remained for a man of honor. I leave it to the regiment to decide whether I have acted in a manner that is worthy of their traditions!"

He laid down the letter. By its side was another. It was addressed to "Fraulein Küner," and it told the same story a little less baldly. "I can add nothing to either," he said. "If it had not been for these candles the thing would have been settled by now."

He turned in his chair, and for the first time since he had blown out the candle noticed the window behind him. He started in horror. He could have declared solemnly that he had pulled down the blind, yet the square framed patch of deep blue sky mocked him through the glass panes. He rose and jerked wildly at the blind. It descended a few inches and then stopped. The roller had jammed. He tugged frantically at the tasseled cord, and it came away in his hand. In desperation he sat down again at the table. Drops of cold perspiration stood out on his forehead, and he tried to dash them away with his clenched fist. He clutched at his hair, and muttered beneath his breath.

If he could only have darkness!

Every detail of the room stood out with a vividness which it had never before possessed. He could trace the pattern of the carpet; the great curves of the "Secession" wall-paper; the sinuous grace of the frieze. The brightest day of Summer had never revealed to him so much, and as one in a weary sickness he began to count the repetitions of the design. Up, down, across, and back. Up, down, across and back....

The bell of a neighboring church-clock aroused him to a sense of time. It was no use delaying. He must do it, light or no light. He stretched out his hand again for the revolver, grasped it, and held it to his temple. As his forefinger sought the trigger, his eye caught the circular silver frame of a portrait on the table before him.

"Dear little girl," he murmured. "I daresay she'll be sorry, if no one else is."

He laid down the revolver and picked up the envelope marked "Fraulein Küner." Would she be able to understand? he asked himself. Had he told her everything as it should be told? A girl could not be expected to see things in the same light as a company of young officers. He ought to make it quite clear to her. He owed her that. He remembered that she had once expressed to him her belief that a man who took his own life was a coward. They were talking of some poor felon who had poisoned himself in prison, and he had agreed that there was no excuse for one in such a case. The man had done something and was afraid to meet the consequences. Suicide there was obviously rank cowardice.

But then, how about himself? What would she think of him? Ah, but his circumstances were wholly different. This was an affair of honor, and there was an accepted code. He said these words over and over as if to impress upon himself their significance. An inviolable code which nothing could possibly alter. Nothing—nothing—nothing. But would she understand? A woman might not recognize the laws by which men bind themselves.

Women were queer beings. She had said to him once, in all earnestness, that a woman's heart might break. He prided himself on being a man of the world, and he had accepted her statement with unconscious condescension. He had thought it a pretty idea. Nonsense, of course, but still a pretty idea. Yet was it altogether nonsense? Suppose it were not nonsense. Suppose a woman's heart could break. A woman with a broken-heart must live a living death. A living death! That was worse than real death. Far worse. Inconceivably worse.

Then Lieutenant Von Wienitz struck a match.

DRAWN BY BLANCHE FISHER

Marian Josephine

The Ordeal of Marian Josephine

BY LILLIAN COLLINS

MARIAN JOSEPHINE'S little head was buried in her folded arms, her golden curls falling in a shower over the hot, tear-stained face. The small, thin form was bowed over her desk in a desperate humiliation that, to her sensitive spirit, carried with it all the finality of spoken doom.

Never, no never, could she forget the awful thing that had happened to her this day. Not for a million dollars—no, not even for that grand, wonderful lady-doll she had once seen in a shop when visiting her aunt in the city—could she dare to look into her playmates' faces and meet the look of pity and awe that would come into their frightened eyes when they thought of her dreadful disgrace.

The small body was very still. Except for an occasional shiver and a long-drawn, sobbing breath one might fancy she merely slept, but the keen, active mind was reviewing the experience; adjusting itself to the miserable future that stretched out in dull perspective of desert waste, with one small, tired figure bending beneath a burden of woe in the foreground. No bright spot marked the oasis where the burden might be shifted or, perchance, laid wholly aside for a time; just as the gray dust of the desert merges into the sky-line, so the future stretched out before her mental vision, blank and cheerless, with none of the allurements of happiness to beckon her on.

The fact of the matter was that in the presence of the entire school, and together with a number of her schoolmates, Marian Josephine had been whipped. Shy and retiring, timid to a fault, a harsh word or stern look was, at any time sufficient to crush her with a sense of wrong-doing. Thus, the punishment—her playmates had already forgotten their own share—had left her broken, humiliated, hopeless.

Called to account for apparent disobedience, her companions in misfortune had marched to the front—some defiant, others sullen: but Marian Josephine knew but one sensation — blind, unreasoning terror. Her little legs almost refused their office when her name was pronounced, but obedience had become so much a part of her character that the

body moved almost without the direction of the will.

Hiding her shamed face within her arms, Marian Josephine stumbled back to her seat. The business of the afternoon proceeded; the shuffling of classes, passing to and from recitation, disturbed the stillness; the sing-song droning of the multiplication table was inextricably tangled with the childish treble voices plaintively asking and reiterating the momentous question: "Can the cat get the rat?" but not once was the bowed head lifted from its lowly position.

At length a more general movement announced the afternoon-intermission, and the children filed out to the playground. On her way to the door, Minnie Harris, one of Marian Josephine's most loyal subjects, paused for a moment, and putting her arm around the still form whispered: "Don't mind it, Marian Josephine. Come on out and play."

Marian Josephine shrank and shivered, while a deep sob shook the thin, nervous little body, but in no other way did she respond to the loving touch of sympathy.

Outside, a group of girls varying in age from fourteen to six years were eagerly talking the matter over when Minnie rushed out of the schoolroom. Her face was flushed and her black eyes snapped as she burst out:

"I'd think teacher'd be ashamed of herself. Anybody ought to know that Marian Josephine just couldn't do anything to deserve a whipping, and as for disobedience, why—she'd no more disobey a rule than she—she'd be cruel to a kitten. I—I wish teacher'd whipped me twice and let Marian Josephine off."

The tears slowly welled up into the black eyes, and Minnie fumbled in her pocket for the handkerchief that, of course, was now nowhere to be found.

Sallie Richards, a girl of fourteen, quietly slipped her own into the trembling little hand, and laid her arm lovingly about the shoulders which were shaking with the sobs that had not been drawn out by her own punishment.

"Of course, Minnie, dear, we understand it was very unjust to punish Marian Josephine, as she was not to blame. She understood the teacher to say that she might go to the creek with the rest of you, and was afraid to come back alone when she heard the bell, while you girls refused to come with her; but you led her into the trouble and should have explained the matter before the teacher punished her."

Indignation dried the tears, and the black eyes looked straight into the deprecating blue ones.

"Sallie Richards, you know perfectly well teacher would not let me explain. I tried to tell her, but she wouldn't let me talk. I didn't think she'd dare hurt Marian Josephine, but she just motioned for that nasty Pete Allson to bring her the whips he had cut. Horrid sneak! I'll get even with him, you bet," and the spirit of revenge glowed, strong and steady, in the clear eyes, giving to the rosy face an expression of strength foreign to its lines and dimples.

The afternoon dragged out its dull length; a wandering beam of sunlight touched the bowed head; the little clock on the teacher's desk marked the hour of four. There was a great rustling of books and a clatter of slates and pencils; shuffling feet moved toward the door; dinner pails rattled; then the voices receded in the distance and Marian Josephine knew the time had come to face her trouble. Minnie Harris lingered anxiously by the door, but the teacher sternly motioned her away. With many a backward glance she unwillingly started toward home.

Assured by the silence that none of the pupils remained, Marian Josephine timidly raised her face and looked furtively about the room. Never would the teacher forget the misery that looked out of the brown eyes, as her own for a moment caught the wavering glance. She longed to take the small form into her arms and speak words of comfort, but there was something of aloofness in the child's attitude that forbade intrusion.

Marian Josephine tremblingly tied on the little white sunbonnet that for the first time in her life she was glad to wear. Usually it hung down her back, secured from falling by the prim little bow under the sensitive chin, but this evening no smallest glimpse of the pathetic little

DRAWN BY BLANCHE FISHER

Marian Josephine's small form was bowed over her desk

face was anywhere visible from its depth.

One small hand grasping her dinner-basket, she reluctantly followed the footsteps of her schoolmates down the dusty road toward home. How her little legs lagged, and how cruelly short the way seemed this evening.

Her mind was trying to find a way to tell her mother of her trouble. She didn't believe she could do it, but then, of course, she must. She could not think of carrying this burden alone forever. Why! she might live to be an awful old woman; most as old as Minnie's Aunt Liza who was nearly fifty. Oh! she hoped God wouldn't make her live to be such a very, very old woman.

Her mother was waiting for her at the gate, and as she stooped to kiss the upturned face, she noticed that something was wrong, but she only quietly remarked: "You look tired, Marian Josephine. Don't you want to lie down and rest until supper is ready?"

"Please, mother, if you don't mind I'd rather take Lady Jane and go out to the apple tree," and the pale face retreated again into the shadow of the white sunbonnet.

In her own special nook under the big apple tree, she sat hugging her favorite doll to her bosom. In her childish way she sensed she was facing the inevitable, realized there was something she must do, yet knew not how she should accomplish it.

The afternoon wore on to its close; the evening-shadows crept about the little cottage. Marian Josephine, as was her nightly custom, undressed Lady Jane, and put her to bed in the tiny cradle; her own clothes were then removed, neatly folded, and placed on a chair at the foot of the bed; the time had come for the evening-prayer and her mother's good-night kiss.

The dreaded, yet longed-for, moment of opportunity came and passed, but the child's small store of courage still refused her the relief of confession. The little, white-robed form crept into bed, but she could not sleep. The wide-open eyes stared, unseeing, out of the window, past the lilac bush that grew just outside, filling the room with the fragrance of its purple blossoms. Wandering about in the soft summer darkness, her gaze at length focused on one big, bright star that, to her distorted fancy, appeared as red as fire. She had always loved to watch the stars until she fell asleep, but she never remembered one so big and red as this one.

Suddenly a coldness crept over her; her heart gave a great bound, her body stiffened in terror as an awful thought flashed into her mind. She knew now what the star was: it was God's eye looking at her. She remembered one time in Sunday-school, when their lesson was the first chapter of Revelations, she had been required to read the fourteenth verse, which said: "His eyes were a flame of fire." She had tried to picture it in her mind at the time, and had meant to ask her mother about it, but had not found an opportunity until the impression faded and finally passed from her mind.

Marian Josephine was a very devout little girl and had never been taught to fear God but rather to look upon him with reverent love. In a quaint fashion of communing with herself she had often wondered how it would feel when, on the Day of Judgment, it came her turn to stand up and know that God's eye rested upon her. Strong in her consciousness of right-doing, she had finally decided she should not be very scared; maybe He would let her hold her mother's hand, and then she knew all would be well.

She stirred uneasily and tried to look away, but the star held her fascinated; the flaming eye pierced to the very center of her soul. The agony at length drew a despairing moan from the pale lips; then the tension relaxed for an instant and she pulled the covers up over her head in a very convulsion of terror. Her mother, hearing the moan, or drawn by the unerring instinct of mother-love, entered the room at that moment.

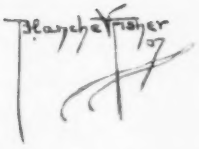
She was much surprised to find the child cowering beneath the bed-clothes. Gently drawing back the covers, she found the little body dripping with perspiration. The golden curls clung to the damp forehead, the pathetic little face was drawn and pinched, while such an

DRAWN BY BLANCHE FISHER

agony of suffering looked out from the soft brown eyes that a spasm of fear clutched at the mother's heart.

"Why, my darling little daughter! what is the matter? Are you ill, or in pain? Come, tell mother all about, and let her help you."

The desire to nestle in her mother's bosom and feel the loving arms about her drew the child with a sick longing to be at peace, but an unutterable fear gripped her. She knew that it was the Day of Judgment for her, and that when she told her dreadful secret, and met the grieved look on her mother's gentle face and the tender reproach in her loving eyes, that would be the end. She didn't know, but she hoped it didn't hurt very much to die. Then a wonderful inspiration came to her: if she could not see her mother's face perhaps it wouldn't be so hard.



"I'd think teacher'd be ashamed"

Suddenly a thin little voice, which she did not know to be her own, broke the stillness and spoke the thing that was in her heart.

"Mother, something awful happened to-day. I can't tell you while you are looking at me, but if you put out the light, and put your face very, very close to mine, and hold me tight, maybe I—"

The frightened little voice trailed off into quivering silence, and the small body became rigid and tense with the exaltation of the martyr-spirit.

Held in the protecting arms of maternal love, the miserable little story fell from her lips, haltingly and in broken sentences, between sobs. Patient questioning drew out the pitiful details that could not have been volunteered; tenderly the wounded spirit was coaxed from its hiding-place and laid bare to the healing touch of love and sympathy.

Indignation struggled with pity in the woman's face as she pictured the nervous, sensitive little body recoiling from the physical agony; trembled for the effect of this brutal experience on the morbid conscientiousness that was ever prone to magnify its own childish errors into offenses calling for the confessional and penance.

Lifting the trembling child from the bed, the mother sat down on a low rocking-chair, and holding her in a close embrace, began to talk.

Gradually, as the words fell in low tones from the woman's lips, the sobbing breath grew soft and rhythmic and the tired little body nestled in her mother's arms. The soothing movement of the woman's fingers, passing with loving caress through the damp curls, stilled the jangling nerves. Dimly the child realized that to-morrow would make its demand upon her courage, but to-night there was rest, happiness, peace.

DRAWN BY BLANCHE FISHER

She was facing the inevitable

DRAWN BY FRANK STICK

The Sin of the Silent One

BY NEWTON A. FUESSLE

Author of "The Lure of Gleaming Lights," etc

MY STORY is that of the sin which God does not forgive—told as Sharples himself had it from the lips of the Silent One,—from him of the huge spectacles, meagreness of words, stature that towered like the fir, and of soft, blue, womanish eyes.

It was in the North, above Sitka, above Valdez, above Fairbanks, above Nome, where *malamoot* had never impressed his foot-print into the snow, where sledge-runner had never wailed forth its moaning, plaintive song, where no white-skinned man had ever made a prayer that his bravery might lead him to that which glittered in the rock. Beyond, lay what was worse than the cold, worse than low-crawling mercury, that whereof no man knew, pierced only by the minds of Sharples and the Silent One who pieced out nightly, as they lay beneath the cold blaze of the sun, tantalizing visions of the new lands they were seeking.

Trembling with cold in their little shaking tents after each day's Northward toil, the little party had crept mile after mile away from the Arctic Circle. That lay nearly a thousand miles behind. Sharples had been almost four days alone with the Silent One. The others, scanning the waste as it lay in the sun-shimmer, had gone with their dogs and guns for meat. Burning pine-sticks had jabbered with Sharples and the Silent One for four days, as if a third man had stayed behind. Day after day Sharples' companion, gaunt built and straight of hair, would dream while his ghost-eyes kept themselves glued steadfastly on the flames as they juggled and spat and fought like playful animals where the resin in the wood oozed. Sharples, dreaming and silent too, wondered by day and by night, how soon the last mile of salty, sticky, ocean-ice would be traversed by sledge-runners, sure-footed dogs, and hoping, patient, toiling man. For soon the breed, the little party's guide, would bring back the others and they would bring plenty of deer and caribou, and then it would be on again, on, on....

"Sharples," said the Silent One, looking away from the fire and blinking steadfastly at the young man.

"Yes," Sharples made answer.

Slowly, in gentle, dreaming accent, came the words of the Silent One: "You are sorry that you are here. Is it not so? Your mind is back where the sun is warm. Somebody is there—a girl. You dream of her by night—also by day. It will be a year, two, perhaps three, before you will see her again. She is young, perhaps. If so she will forget you—maybe—as girls will. To you she is the greatest thing in the world, greater than your task, greater than the discovery of the lands we seek. Even if one day we shall see with our eyes that which we seek, even if we may take back to the world the story of what we have done, and you return to the South to find that you have

lost her whom you are dreaming of, you will say that you should not have left her. Is it not so?"

"She will not forget," returned Sharples soberly. "We are going to succeed, you and I. They are talking about us—all the world is talking. She hears. She will not forget."

"You are certain?" said he of the gentle voice.

"It cannot be otherwise."

"Listen," said the other after a pause. "I will tell you something—a story which no man has heard. Listen. You have seen the Claquato, the emerald lake which lies, dreaming and flashing in the sun. You have seen where it shoots its turquoise light toward heaven, and reaches up with its slim, pale river-fingers into the Canadian Rockies. You know the place, south of Sitka many miles — on the one side Portage La Chien, and far off on the other the sea?"

"I know the lake," returned the other. Then the Silent One continued, he who seldom spoke, save to utter the name of a bird sailing across the heavens, giving its genus in Latin, and speculating on why it was so far from its habitat, or, perhaps, to discuss in droning voice the tides of the Beaufort Sea, and the probability of land lying hidden between the West Parry and the East Siberian Islands.

"It is many years," flowed the calm and gentle voice, "since a young man came to the emerald waters. In a *tepee* he made his home. It was summer, and the sun was warm. Daily his canoe crept out upon the lake, and the murmur of the water on its sides was the only voice that came to him. It was so for a month. Nights, there was the voice of the faggots in front of his *tepee,* and the wind crying in the trees. Of body the man was not strong. In Germany he had given too much of his time to his books, his science. It was for this that he had sought the balsam of the North, and the great silences."

As the speaker went on, Sharples sat studying his mouth as the lips moved. It was a mouth which heretofore had seemed to match poorly the great blue, womanish eyes, as if it had been painstakingly trained to sternness. But now, as the young man watched, there was a softening of the lines, until eyes and mouth seemed to fall into harmony.

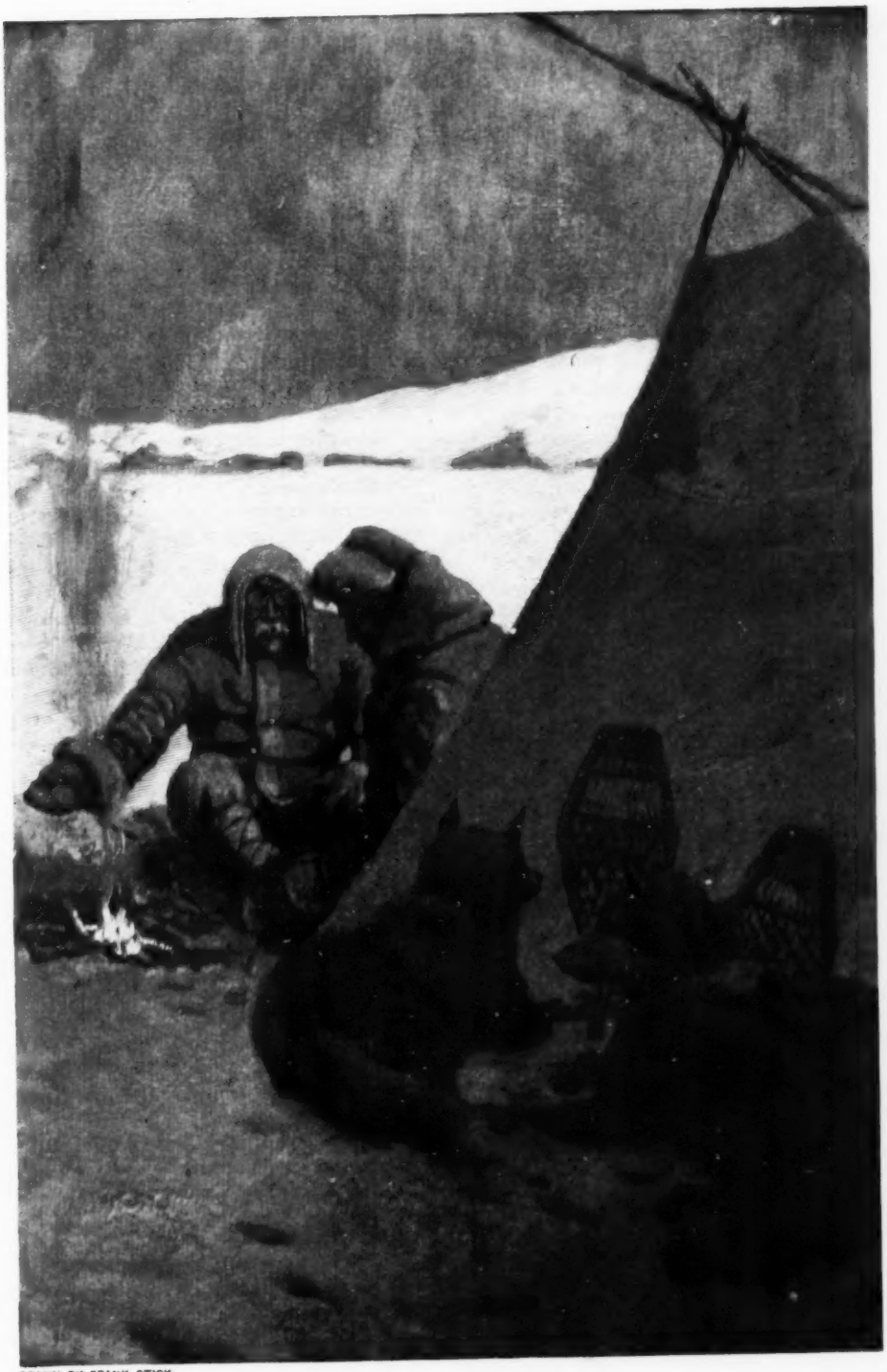
"Daily," the Silent One resumed, "as his canoe crept out upon the waters, the young man thrived. He sought the remotest points of the little lake, for the arm which swept the paddle grew stronger, day by day, and into his cheek came the red of morning. The blood sprang swiftly through his body. Also into his heart there stole sensations he had never known, until his masters in the old world, the massive buildings of his schools, and his books and microscope grew faint in his memory.

"One day he urged his canoe up a tributary he had not yet explored. He had not gone far when there came to his ears from the distance the faintest murmur of a song, and yet hardly a song, rather a few truant notes running wild. His paddle stopped; he listened. The song was an old French hymn; and he knew the Jesuit fathers had been there. He paddled farther. It was a woman's voice, a girl's. The breeze that brought it to him was frail. He called it a miser-breeze. There was a tenderness in word and note. In his heart he built himself quickly an altar to the unknown goddess.

"Presently both breeze and song died away as strangely as they had come. Straightway the man felt alone. In his heart there was much of sadness. Leaving his canoe, he strode through the woods, half afraid. On his lips there wavered the song the wind had brought, and in his mind its notes were piecing out the image of the singer. Fear, and a strange, new longing stole into his heart.

"He came at length to a little cabin in the woods. In front of it sat a girl, fingering the leaves of a book which lay in her lap, and, as he stood and gazed, the notes of the hymn rose once more from her lips. A twig cracked underneath his foot, and she looked up.

"He knew it well, the language she spoke, except that a strange accent shaded some of her words. The man's French was that of Paris, and as pleasantly new to her as her own French Canadian was to him. This she told him afterwards. She



DRAWN BY FRANK STICK

Your mind is back where the sun is warm"

was alone. Her grand-uncle, the old priest had gone up the river in his canoe. Her brother was away with his gun. They left her often alone, she said. She was not afraid. She pointed at the book of French sermons on her lap. It was these, she said, that made the hours go more swiftly whenever her grand-uncle and her brother were gone.

"When the man said *adieu* she corrected him with a prettily spoken *au revoir*. In the distance sparkled the white tops of the mountains, and the man called her the Girl of the Snows, and she laughed—as did he. It was not mirth, but gladness—a new, strange gladness that tinkled forth in her laugh, and his.

"The man returned again, and again. Soon it came to pass that he pointed his canoe in no other direction, save toward the cabin of the old priest, and the Girl of the Snows, and her brother.

"One day he said, 'Do you not tire of reading the sermons in your grand-uncle's books?'

" 'They are all that I have, they and the hymn book,' she replied. 'They are gloomy, sometimes, but I am lonelier without them.'

"The next day the man took her some of his books—Halévy, Mérimée, and Hugo, among them. When she saw them, the girl's eyes shone, like the emerald lake when the sun was high.

"There was happiness too in the man's heart when his canoe crept down the little river and across the black lake that night. When he awoke in the morning the wind was shrieking in the trees, and the *tepee* trembled. Also, snow was flying. Winter had come, and with a start the young man knew that he would have to go away, back to his masters, and his books. He had not marked how swiftly the days had raced—since he had heard that song in the woods. He had been mindful only of the girl, the laughter that sprang quickly and often to her lips, the softness of her words when she spoke, her eyes with their almost tearful gentleness. That day, as his canoe rocked across the lake, the murmur of friendly waves was gone, and, instead, their voice, grown suddenly stern, told him that the time had come when he would have to go away.

"The winds were crying loudly as he approached the priest's cabin, and the Girl of the Snows did not hear him. He could see her through the window. She sat with a book in her lap, but not with lips dreamily crooning over a hymn, as was her habit while sitting over one of the other books with its long sermons. Instead, her eyes were traveling swiftly from line to line, and from page to page.

" 'And now,' said the man to himself as he watched her, 'it must be *adieu*, and not *au revoir*.'

"He entered. 'Ah,' he said lightly, 'it is Mérimée that you are reading. He makes the hours run—is it not so?'

" 'Oh,' she said, 'it is you? It was good of you to bring me these books. They are so different from the others.'

" 'Jacques is gone?' asked the young man, afraid to say what he had come to tell her. Studying her face, he knew already what her answer would be, he fancied. He would ask her to wait for him. And before the snow came again he would return and take her away with him. But, instead, he said again, still afraid: **'Jacques is gone?'**

" 'Yes,' she replied, 'brother is away with his gun. I worry about Jacques often. He stays here seldom. This time he is away on a long hunt with two others. I wish he would remain here more with me and with my uncle.'

"The Girl of the Snows stopped, then her eyes wandered out across the landscape where winter was making its carpet of white and fallen leaves and shadows, said: 'All day I have read of love—always of love. But it is not that of which my uncle has told me nor that of which I have read in the sermons. It is something new. It is that which man feels for woman, and woman for man. It is all new to me. This love is something which uncle has never known—for he has never married. Why has he never told me of this new love? Surely he must know. Uncle knows everything. Since I was a little girl, he has told me always only about the other love, which whispers in the trees, which makes the moon and the stars shine when the sun is gone, which sends the rain, which made the mountains, and the whole world. Why has he

never told me of *this* love? Maybe, if I had known, someone would have come to me—a king, or a prince, like those of whom I have read to-day.'

"The girl stopped. Again her eyes wandered toward the far white mountain-tops, and presently she went on, 'If ever I love a man, he must do wonderful things, like the men in this book. Who knows—maybe he will be a great soldier. But he must do things that are wonderful and good, like the men in the book. If such an one does not come, I shall never love—only my uncle, and my brother.'

"The man stood silent. In his mind the girl's words had struck a sinister chord, which leaped quickly into a strange, uncanny melody, and its notes danced in a maddening riot through his brain. Bewildered, he waited until he could speak. Then: 'That which is in the book is not life. It is only a picture. Love is a thing that is different. It is as your uncle has told you. It is strangest and sweetest when it comes to those who are only men and only women. One need not be a prince, or a soldier if he would love.'

"The man stopped. His own words had frightened him. He was afraid to say more. Also, the girl was silent. Her eyes watched the sun washing the mountain-range in crimson. It was so, until a wolf howled thrice in the forest. Then she raised her eyes to his and he saw that they were full of sadness.

" 'If it be otherwise than I have read to-day,' she said, 'then I shall never love, and may the dear God help me!'

"From out the dusk came the cry of another beast and the trembling ululation of an answering call. Suddenly voices sounded outside the cabin. The girl hastened to light the lamp. There was a knock and the man strode to the door. Two men entered.

"Said one: 'We are United States deputy marshals. We have federal court warrants for the arrest of Jacques Valprin. We are told that he lives here.' As the man finished, the girl advanced out of the shadow. Terror was big in her eyes. Jacques Valprin—her brother—her only brother—he whom she loved—he who had gone away that morning!

" 'The crime?' she demanded quickly.

" 'Smuggling, on three counts,' returned the officer, 'and murder in the second degree on another.'

" 'Mon Dieu!' moaned the girl.

"Her eyes sought those of the scientist in her terror.

"Turning to the officers he said: 'I am he. I am Jacques Valprin.'

"They let him gather the girl into his arms before they took him away. She suffered him to kiss her, not once but again, and again. 'You are right,' he whispered. 'The greatest love is such as you have read of in the books.'

"When she raised her eyes to his, it was as if a sudden light had poured itself passionately out of her soul. 'You will wait for me until I come back?' he whispered. And, between her sobs, she promised.

"Then they took him away, and his heart pounded with love and gladness. For three days the journey was toward the west, by canoe and by foot, and then they reached the sea. Over many portages he had helped them 'pack' the canoe, so that his muscles had grown weary. Also, they propounded all manner of questions. Of these he answered none. At first they guarded him closely, shackling his hands and his ankles at evening. Nights there was the crackling of pine-sticks and the glow of a fire, and mornings it was on, on. By day, by night, always, there echoed in the man's heart the old French hymn the girl had sung the day he found her at the cabin. Once it rose to his lips—one night when the man and his guards sat before the fire. One of them placed his finger to his head. Thereafter the prisoner was silent, but with always the song in his heart.

"Coming at last to the sea, they took a ship, and in six days were in Seattle. Into the King County jail on the great hill, the man was cast. Young men from the newspapers came and eyed him through the irons, asking him many questions, but he would answer nothing. That night when the other prisoners slept, the man whose name was written in the jail-book as Jacques Valprin, droned softly and happily to himself the hymn which the Girl of the Snows had sung many times to him. The man was happy. He

DRAWN BY FRANK STICK

The emerald lake lies dreaming in the sun

had found something better than his microscopes, his masters, or his books. Had she not promised that she would wait for him, promised with her warm, red lips close to his?

"The next day they took him to an ugly, wooden building. In it was the federal court. A dudish looking man, the United States district attorney, read the charges against Jacques Valprin. As he read, the prisoner forgot to listen; he was thinking of the old priest's cabin beside the emerald lake. When the dudish looking man was through, the prisoner told the judge that he was guilty.

"They took him the next day to McNeil's Island. It was there that the great federal prison stood. They cut his hair, gave him a prison suit, and a number. Then he began his ten years' task of breaking stone with a hammer. But she had given him her promise and he was content.

"He toiled with robbers caught on the high seas, with smugglers, with renegades from Alaska, with government thieves—toiled out a year and another, and another, silent and satisfied.

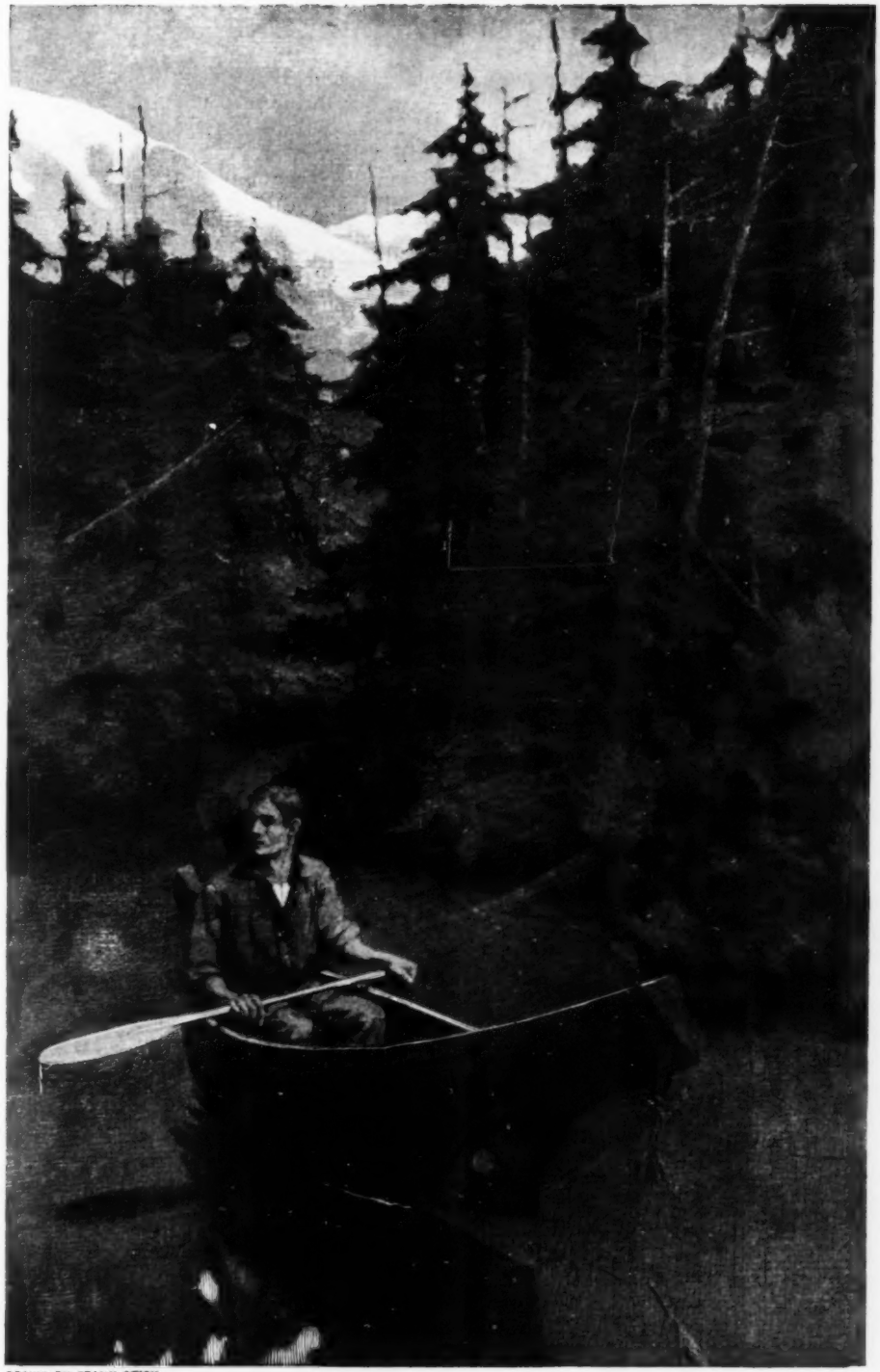
"Soon his muscles grew hard and strong like the iron arms of the other convicts. Across the seas his masters wondered why he did not come back. This he realized, but did not care. He had found a greater master than they.

"Seven years, and there came a pardon, for he had been an excellent prisoner. His guards shook his hand when he went away, and gave him what money they could spare. Seattle had become a great city, and to his ears came its mighty roar as he approached on a little Sound steamer. Much shipping lay at the wharves. It was summer. That day he embarked on a steamer for Sitka. He was there in three days, then south again. He found the emerald lake. Again his canoe crept across it and up the slim river that reached into the mountains. It was as if he were dreaming, still dreaming, as in the long nights during the years which had multiplied themselves into seven.

"He leaped out of his canoe and ran through the woods like a boy. Where the girl had sat with the great book of sermons in her lap an old Indian sat smoking. Two Siwash boys were running races near-by. The old Indian was watching them.

" 'Tell me,' said the man, 'do you know where they have gone—the old priest, the girl, and her brother, Jacques Valprin? They who lived here?'

"For a number of minutes the old In-



DRAWN BY FRANK STICK

There came to his ears the faintest murmur of a song

dian smoked in silence. Then he observed, 'Heap year 'go?'

"'Yes,' said the other eagerly, 'long ago.'

"'Jacques Valprin—ol' priest—gal—hah! Priest he dead, one year, two year, t'ree year. Jacques Valprin—white man shoot um. He die. Gal, gal, she marry, marry white man—one year, two year, t'ree year, four year, fi' year.'

"With no word, the man strode away through the woods. Again his canoe crept down the slim river, and across the emerald lake. He went back to his lesser masters, his books, his microscopes, his maps. Then he became an explorer, always seeking, always seeking, but finding only small things, only small things. Nights he sits beside the fire, wordless, dreaming, always dreaming. They call him the Silent One."

The voice ceased, the last word trailing faintly away, mingling with the pitiful moan of the wind in the trees that stood marking the line where the frozen sea ended and the frozen land began. A *malamoot* slunk out of the shadows to Sharples, buried his great tawny head between the young man's knees, and whined dismally as only dogs in the Northland do.

"Lost, lost—I have lost everything," said the Silent One presently in his gentle, softly spoken, dreamful accents. "Mine was the sin which God, even in His mercy, does not forgive. I went away and left her alone. I saw a love, a great love, leap suddenly in her heart, and then I went away and left it to wither and die, until another came and made a new love flare into being. He did not sin; he stayed; and Heaven was pleased, and gave her to him.....

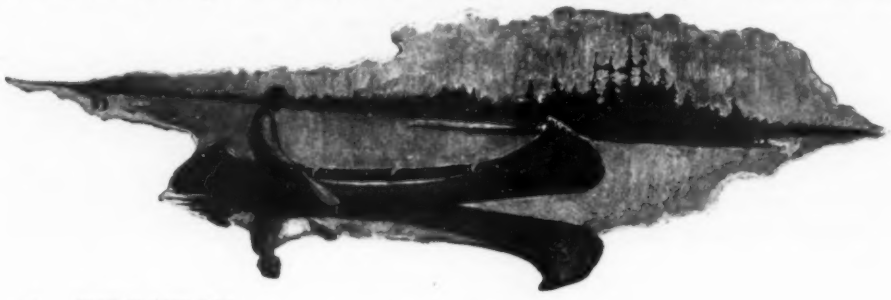
"Listen. I will tell you something. I will tell you why I sit like this and dream. It is because it is there in the fire, or off there in the night, her face."

Again the tawny-haired dog buried his head in Sharples' lap.

"Listen," resumed the Silent One. "I sought you out to come with me into the North. I saw that you had both the head and the courage. Now I have discovered too that you have a heart, because you, also, sit before the fire and dream. The head, the courage, and the heart, these three. It is the heart that is the greatest. The other two are nothing. You are serving the lesser masters. The heart—that is the greatest. You have left her. Go back. Do not wait one year, two years, three years. I waited. In my heart there is a great affection for you, Sharples. Therefore I have told you this—this story that no man has ever heard before."

Sharples chose the great tawny-headed *malamoot*, the next morning, as the lead-dog for his lonely pilgrimage over the back trail. Twenty days' provisions he lashed on his sledge, for he knew he could depend on the three places where the party had *cached* grub after leaving the last whaling station. That was forty days distant. Swinging his raw-hide lash, he called to his team to *mush*. In his words, as he cried to the dogs, was a tremor, like that which had arisen the moment before when he said good-by and gripped the hand of him they called the Silent One.

At Nome, when Sharples urged his dogs into the mining town, he was first



DRAWN BY FRANK STICK

He found the emerald lake

recognized by the correspondent of one of the Seattle newspapers. Instantly the cable-ticker sent startling advices along the slim wire-nerves connecting the world-end town with civilization. That day the Associated Press told all the world that the younger of the twain who had gone forth to brave the hazards of an exploration never before attempted, had given up the task and was returning. And all the world wondered—all but two. One was a girl of the Southland, who had dreamed, and mourned, and prayed for many months. The other was he whom men called the Silent One; he who at night sat mutely before the fire in the deep stillness while the light of the flames, flickering and wagging restlessly out of the sticks of pine, glimmered dreamingly in his womanish eyes.

An Alien

BY FRANK H. SWEET

WHEN the girl reached her own door she turned to look at the sun, which was just sinking behind the cotton-mill. But it was a dull, disreputable ball which leered at her through the grimy atmosphere, and she threw out her hand with a sudden revulsion of pent-up disgust.

"'Taint my sun," she half-sobbed; "hit's—hit's on'y jes' some cheap thing the fact'ry gits up."

The company used the poorest grade of soft-coal, and though its dense smoke had ceased to blacken the sky above the tall chimney, it still clogged the moist lower atmosphere of the mill-yard and the cheap, hastily constructed village in the little bend of the sluggish river. Some of it even seemed to cling to the slouching, sallow-faced help as they shambled toward their homes in the long rows of unpainted cabins.

The girl looked at them scornfully as they came between the houses and straggled along the streets. What a pitiful, contemptible thing it all was, the slinking creatures, the dreary rows of two-room cabins, exactly alike, the narrow streets that were always oozy with mud! No wonder the factory-people's sun was ashamed to shine openly!

A heavy step approached, and she turned to look into her father's easy, good-natured face.

"Ye 'pear to git ahead o' we uns, 'Nervy," he said, with obvious disapproval in his voice; "I spoke to—to Bess coming out, an' she said ye lef' the fact'ry like ye was fired outen a gun. She—they don't like fo'ks to be offish an' onneighborly. We uns have been here mos' two months now, an' ye ain' scarsely spoke to nobody."

At the name of Bess the girl drew back, flushing hotly.

"I don't keer for none of 'em," she retorted, drearily; "they're so cheap an' triflin'. Hit's bad 'nough in this cabin, with nothin' but mo' cabins an' mud an' mill-smoke all 'round; but hit 'lows me to git to myse'f, some. Oh pap! if on'y we hadn' lef' the mountain!"

She turned abruptly into the cabin, and he followed.

"But hit was you as seemed mos' set on comin', 'Nervy," he expostulated, as he seated himself upon a box and watched her start a fire and set about getting supper. "When I firs' spoke of hit, ye was jes' wil' to come. Ye said thar'd be chances to study an' l'arn to be like fo'ks, an' that ye wouldn' have to grow up ign'rant an' no 'count. An' now," wonderingly, "here ye be homesick a'ready. I'm afeared, 'Nervy, that ye ain' so strong minded an'—an' projectin' as fo'ks 'lowed on. I didn' keer much to come myse'f at firs', but now I wouldn' go back. Fo'ks here seem mighty peart an' sosherble, an' I 'low we's goin' to git on right well if we ain'—ain' too offish."

The girl's face hardened a little, but she made no answer. Water was placed upon the stove to heat, and a handful or two of meal taken from a paper bag and sifted into a pan, then deftly mixed and patted into a long round pone. That

baking, she cut several slices of bacon and arranged them upon the frying pan, then prepared the coffee. Presently they were all transferred to the bare pine table, and supper was ready.

The man drew his box forward and began to eat hungrily, but from time to time raised his eyes furtively to the face opposite. Once he cleared his throat, as if about to speak, but hesitated and allowed his gaze to fall back to the table. At length, as he transferred the last slice of bacon to his plate, he blurted out desperately:

"Mebbe ye'd ought to have mo' comp'ny, 'Nervy. 'Tain' very lively with jes' one man like me in the house, an' me mos'ly out. Now thar's the Grogans that take bo'ders," shifting his eyes from her direct gaze; "they've got fo' or five mighty bright young gals, an' I do hear one of 'em's goin' off. P'raps ye might git her place. They don't charge but two dollars, an' that would leave ye more'n a dollar a week for spen'in' money. Of co'se," hastily, "I'd hate to have ye go 'way, but if I 'lowed ye'd be havin' a better time an' be mo' content like, I'd be willin'. An' fo'ks do say they's mighty lively over to Grogans."

Her lips curled a little.

"Then hit's true?" she said. "I've been hearin' ye was aimin' to marry that gal Bess, and I reckon I've done said sharp things to fo'ks that hinted hit. But I—I couldn' he'p hit, pappy," her voice breaking suddenly, "with my own mamma dead on'y five months. If ye'd wait a year, I wouldn' say a word, an'—an' I'd even try to make frien's with Bess. Oh, pappy, wont ye please wait on mammy's 'count?"

The man made no answer, except to shake his head sullenly. Her face again grew hard.

"I s'pose hit's Bess that's to Grogans' an' is goin' off," she said, coldly, "an' she's done tole ye that she an' me can't live in the same house. Ain' that hit, pappy? When she comes here, I'm to go to—Grogans, or somewhar'. Well don't be skeered. Jes' whenever she tells ye to sen' me off, I—I—"

She rose hastily and went to a window; and the man, with an uneasy glance in her direction, seized his hat and without a word slipped quietly from the room.

Half an hour later she was again standing by the window, her few household duties completed. The doors and windows of the other cabins along the street were already being filled for the customary evening-gossip and scolding; and as the shrill voices, more and more strident and denunciatory, came into her room, she suddenly dropped the sash and then went and closed the door.

Seating herself upon one of the two or three boxes which the room contained, she tried to fancy she was back home, gazing out across broad valleys and ranges to where the sun was setting in indescribable splendor behind some lofty peak. But it was impossible; and soon she was back by the window, longing for fresh air, but shrinking from the war of words. With the sash down, she could hear the dull rising and falling of the denunciation and gossip, but was spared the details.

Presently she noticed a tall, broad-shouldered figure coming along the street, stopping now and then as if to make inquiries. When he came opposite, some one pointed toward her door, and he struck directly across the street, through the mud. A moment later his clear, imperative rat-tat sounded through the house, and she went to the door, wondering who it could be.

The uncertainty was of brief duration, for as the door swung back his,

"'Nervy, I am glad to see ye!" was mingled with her pleased, "Oh, Jake, you here?"

Then with a warm flush on her face she re-entered the room; and he followed, laughing boyishly and ducking his head in order to pass through the low doorway.

There were no chairs in the room, and she motioned him to the largest of the boxes. Then she came and placed her hand familiarly upon his shoulder.

"Now, tell me, Jake," she commanded, "what ever brought ye 'way off to these parts; an' how's all the fo'ks, an' the farmin' an' huntin' an' fishin,' an' the woods an' peaks, an'—an' everything? Oh, Jake," her eyes shining, "tell me all 'bout everything."

But he only possessed himself of her hand, laughing.

"You uns are in a regular hornets' nest of a place," he declared. "I axed for ye to one house, an' to another an' another, an' though nobody seemed to know ye by name, they all wanted to talk an' say somethin' 'bout somebody else. Hit was on'y when I spoke of ye as bein' a tall, fine lookin' gal, with squar' shoulders, that they seemed to know. An' then, whew!"

He paused abruptly, and at that moment a flare through a broad crack in the stove crossed her face.

"'Nervy," he cried sharply, springing to his feet, "what's the matter? Ye've been sick, an—an' yes, ye've been cryin'!"

"No, no, Jake," she expostulated, smiling and flushing under his anxious gaze; "hit's—hit's jes' the hard work an' lonesomeness of the place. Ye don't know—"

"Yes, I do know," explosively. "Hit's that shifty-eyed daddy—no, I don't mean that, Nervy. But I heerd hit all comin' 'long. When fo'ks l'arned whar I was goin' they jes' seemed achin' to tell me 'bout the gal he was to marry, an' that she said you an' her couldn' live in the same house. Why, Nervy, I—"

His face had grown dark, but now it suddenly cleared, and he ended with a laugh.

"Anyhow, hit's goin' to he'p my plans."

"Your plans?" she asked.

He settled himself comfortably upon the box and drew her down beside him.

"Ye 'member that day we parted on the mountain," he said with a suppressed eagerness in his voice which she couldn't fail to notice. "Ye wa'n't satisfied with our narrer way o' livin', an' wanted to fit yo'se'f for somethin' nobler in the big worl' outside; an'—an' ye 'lowed ye loved me, but couldn' marry me 'cause I wa'n't ready to climb up 'long o' ye. An' I'm free to say, 'Nervy, I didn' feel I could leave the mountains then. I'd been brung up 'mong 'em, an' I loved 'em, an' hit seemed to me thar wa'n't no other place fit for livin'. I had a nice farm an' was doin' well, an' I did 'low I was of valoo to the neighborhood. So I let ye come off alone.

"But I was mistook, 'Nervy," his voice becoming more earnest and tender; "I knowed hit jest as soon as ye was gone. I didn' car' any mo' for the farm nor the mountains; hit was you I wanted, jes' you an' nothin' else. So I've done come here to climb up with ye, an' to do anything ye like an' go anywhar ye say. I've been to the fact'ry, an' thar ain' no job for me jes' now 'cept tendin' fire in the engine-room at ninety cents a day. I kin git bo'ded for fifty cents. That leaves fo'ty cents for gittin' ahead. 'Tain' much, but mebbe hit'll do for a start. I did 'low on waitin' till I could git a little saved up, but now yo' daddy is—is goin' to do what he's goin' to do, hit seems to me the bes' thing is for us to git married right to oncet. We kin git along. Ye've knowed me sence I was a little feller an' ye know I can be trusted, an' ye know that I gener'ly do what I set out to do. An'—an' that's all. Will ye marry me, 'Nervy?"

She rose swiftly and stood before him, her eyes shining. He could see the eagerness, the longing in them even in the dim light.

"Ye ain' sol' nor—nor rented the farm, have ye, Jake?" she breathed.

"Not yet; hit's the wrong time o' year. I've jes' lef' hit in brother Tom's han's to look out for."

"I'm so glad; oh, Jake, ye can't ever know how glad," she half-sobbed. "Yes, I'll marry ye; but we wont stay here. We'll go back to we uns' mountains an' climb up together thar. An' jes' think, Jake," as he rose and stood beside her, "we'll have our own sun, an' hit wont be cheap an' dirty lookin', an' we needn' wade roun' in mud, an' thar wont be gossipin' an' fightin' an' scoldin' fo'ks all roun' us. Oh, Jake, Jake!" and she raised her face to his, transfigured at the thought.

And he, almost reverently, bent down and kissed it.

A CHRISTMAS GIFT

BY HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD

HE had always posed for honesty—ability and a bluff honesty. By a sledge-hammer force of will he had made most people take the pose for reality; and was already, in his early middle age, after a career that had in it certain elements of brutality, at the head of what might almost be called an international institution. People forgot or forgave his past; or disbelieved what had been said of it. If his reputation was not just, it was great; and now, that he had married, and a daughter had been born to him, it was more necessary than ever to maintain it.

As for his wife, the woman that could marry such a man as he was at the time, needs small attention. She filled her place with that feminine charm which belongs to a fine animal; and perhaps found out her error, for she died early. The daughter, through some inherited grace of past-and-gone grandmothers, was an altogether exquisite little piece of tricksy nature, perhaps a reversion to a fine original type before degeneracy, perhaps what gardeners call a "freak." She had won her way into the inner depths of her father's heart, and made the support of his name a thing of importance, if but for her sweet sake alone.

And there it lay on his writing-table—that certificate of stock—unregistered, for it would never do to have it known as standing in his name or possession. It was the price of his collusion with certain parties in relation to affairs that would give them inconceivable wealth, but whose principle involved an immense wrong.

It was not, indeed, a question of any active work on his part; but merely that of withholding his negation; and that by some ponderous and incomprehensible movement of a peculiar brain, he had resolved to do beforehand. But he had not said so. The last man who left the room had placed that packet on the table. In allowing the departure, he had virtually accepted the bribe. Applethorpe was by this time on the train, hurrying away at a mile a minute. To be sure, there was the mail; but there was danger of loss and discovery by that, and it was discovery that he feared. You could hardly look at the thing in the light of a bribe, he said to himself, when it had not influenced his action in the least. But in that case it was a theft from the company. And, anyway, it looked ugly, and it was best to do nothing, and let sleeping dogs lie.

The certificate represented what would be one hundred thousand dollars' worth

of shares in the capital stock of the "Great Reserve" when the stock should touch twenty-five. At present they had just succeeded in getting it listed. He would only have to lay it away in some secret drawer, and when it stood at the point named, put now and then a few shares upon the market, and all would be well. Or, if he chose to be patient till the stock stood at par or over, as it was bound to do under manipulation, sell the whole block for something like a half millon. Applethorpe would always be at his service in the matter of a private disposal of it.

A half million! He had been a money spender, not a saver. With a huge self-confidence he had felt the future secure. But since this child had come, this dear Rosemary, he had seen things differently, and had every year put aside for her a portion of his income. Oh well, the undertaking might never amount to anything. For the rest, if any one chose to make him a gift, why shouldn't he take it?

The door opened, and little Rosemary came in, the sunshine making a halo of her pale curls as she stood with her back against the door. For what reason was it that he instantly clapped a paper over that certificate? The very action said he was a thief.

"You're hiding something!" cried the child gayly. "That's the way I do, when somebody comes in if I—I've helped myself to taffy—stolen it, you know," she said confidentially, and coming and leaning her head on her father's shoulder. "The trouble is, when you've stolen it, you have to eat it all by yourself. Still—it's taffy!" said the pretty minx.

And then the sanctimonious owner in the "Great Reserve" took the little girl on his broad knee and gave her such a long-worded homily upon the sin of stealing taffy that a thief loomed before her as black as a bogy; and she cried with shame over her evil behavior, and the dishonor of it, and with grief at her wickedness, and with boredom of the tireless many-syllabled speech, until the whole transaction made her, from that hour, see dishonesty in fierce colors and loathe it as if by miracle. No more stolen taffy for her, no more dear doll-rags, she must remember that she was the daughter of an honest man.

"Oh, I'm so glad you're an honest man!" she cried, hugging him with all her little strength. "They call you that honest old lambaster. Nurse read it in the papers. I'm so glad you're my father!"

And then her tears being dry, and her arms tired with trying to hug the big expanse of his shoulders, she fell to rummaging his table and uncovered the certificate. It was a very simple certificate.

"See how well I can read," she said.

She slowly spelled out the title of the "Great Reserve." The little innocent white hands made the paper seem black.

The perspiration stood on the man's forehead. To hinder her would make it a matter of more consequence in her memory. Yet what was a child's memory? But in a moment or two she had danced off, stopping to courtsey to the shadow of herself that the sunbeams cast upon the floor. And then her father locked the paper away, as he had been advised, and determined to think no more about it.

Often in the swift passing of the years, he was astonished at some fresh perfecton in Rosemary's development, some fine excellence that all at once made its appearance in her, her love for every one with whom she came in contact, her sweet mercy, her absolute truth, her faith in all that was good. And he said it was time he did something to make sure the future of such a child as this, who in every hour of every day made herself more precious, and held before him a standard he had not known. Yes, he must be what Rosemary thought he was; and if the power that makes for righteousness did not help him then there was nothing of any use in the universe. And although it was by no means possible for the man to live up to Rosemary's belief in him, yet he was able to see what that belief was, and in some inexplicable and unknown way he treasured it as a heathen does his god.

It is amazing, the swiftness with which

the years fly by. Yesterday Rosemary was a child. To-day, who was this lovely creature with her chiffons blowing about her, surrounded by friends and lovers, courted, as it had happened—having gone abroad with Mrs. Poictiers—in two worlds, a queen in her own? Sometimes, as he looked at her, her father's heart stood still before her beauty, and the effect of her innocence, her sweetness, her high being. Then he puffed out his big chest with the consciousness that she was his, and that she would not be his unless he deserved her.

And meanwhile she looked at him as if he were something beyond men. He was still at the head of the Institution, and had honor of all men; his reputation had constantly grown; he almost believed himself as great as other people believed him. He had had periodical attacks of shrinking in his estate when he saw in the stock-lists that "Great Reserve" stood at twenty, stood at twenty-five, stood at forty. When it reached fifty he took out the certificate and looked it over. He could not have told you why he did not sell it. A quarter of a million is a great deal of money. Still, in the present way of living it is not so much as a far less sum was a generation ago. He locked the paper up again, and having little occasion to consult the reports of the stock-market he could almost have flattered himself that he had forgotten it. It was, however, at the back of his consciousness like an expected trouble, a half-remembered thing of evil, a contemplated but yet uncommitted sin.

He often wished that he could lay by more from his salary and the income of his great platitudinous works for Rosemary's portion. He would have liked to give her splendor, luxury, jewels. It hurt him sometimes to see other girls in their superior adornment when he went out with her.

Once he had taken her to some fine function in honor of a foreign hero, and he thought, as the maid put the long white cloak over the blush-colored gown that she looked like some exquisite thing of flesh and blood turning into an angel. He believed in angels, in the old-fashioned way, and with some fear of them. One could not live with Rosemary and not believe in them.

As the guests went in to dinner on this occasion, suddenly everything but the music stopped. The string of Mrs. Applethorpe's pearls had broken and the precious spheres were tumbling about the floor, hiding themselves with preternatural celerity. Butlers and host and hostess and guests and hero scrambled after them, but long before they were secured the dinner was a wreck.

"The idea," said Colonel Rives, feeling the outrage to his appetite, "of such a disturbance over a string of beads!"

"That string of beads, let me tell you," said Mrs. Poictiers, at his right, "cost some eighty thousand dollars."

"Just the pickings of the last railroad that Applethorpe stole," said the colonel.

"Oh!" said Rosemary, half under her breath, "you can't mean it. Why, he is a friend of my father's!"

"Oh, we're all his friends. You knew such things were done, but you didn't suppose you'd meet those who did them," said the colonel. "Why, Applethorpe's the man who worked the 'Great Reserve' swindle. At least," with his mouth full, "I suppose it's a swindle."

"What was that?" asked Mrs. Poictiers.

"A long story with the man—"

"So near and yet so far."

"A successful scheme for making something out of nothing. Sells considerably above par now, and every dollar of it robbed from widows and orphans and the government."

"And they ask such a person here!" breathed Rosemary.

"Oh, bless you, the more he does it the more they ask him! Why, haven't they always given honor to pure robbery? Your dukes and earls are the descent of nothing better. Their forbears raided and robbed sheep-farms and little kingdoms. These fellows raid and rob railways. Small difference. You don't suppose the reason they make marquises out of brewers in England is because they love the beer so much? No; they love the brewers' money. We love Applethorpe's money."

"The House was Sweet with the Odor of Balsam Boughs and the Smell of Christmas Cheer"

"Oh!" exclaimed Rosemary. "What a philosophy! It is detestable!"

"What is that which is so detestable?" asked Mr. Applethorpe from across the table.

Rosemary did not reply. And as she sat there, her cheeks flushing, her eyes flashing, she seemed that moment to young Almain Van Dorp to be something radiant.

Almain Van Dorp drove home with them, having lent his own carriage to the Applethorpes whose horses had met with an accident.

"Oh, how could you do it?" cried Rosemary, as the door slammed.

"Would you have Mrs. Applethorpe walk home in this October rain?"

"He has made other people walk."

"Rosemary, my love!"

The opportunity of reproving Rosemary was so rare that it was a luxury.

"But Colonel Rives said so, papa. He used much stronger language. Papa gave me such a lecture upon honesty once when I had stolen some taffy, that a thief seems something—oh, if there's any one thing I have a horror of it's a dishonest man—"

"But that's a little rough on Mr. Applethorpe," said Almain. "He's not such a bad sort. More than once he has tided me over a sea of trouble."

"Oh, papa!" she cried, hugging her father's arm. "I am so glad you are not rich! All the world knows you are an honest man! It makes me proud and haughty!"

"And naughty, too, I am afraid, my treasure," said her father.

The street lights flashing in on them made Van Dorp half sick with envy of the man who owned this treasure.

"Oh, yes," said Rosemary, "I remember that lecture this minute. And then when you had cured her you forgave your little thief, and she showed you how well she could read. What beautiful big engraved letters they were! I see them now—'Great Reserve.' Why, papa, that is what Colonel Rives was talking about—the 'Great Reserve' swindle. Dear me—did they swindle you, papa?"

The man was cold and moist from head to foot.

"No, my child," he managed to say with his stiff lips and thick voice, "I never made nor lost a dollar by 'Great Reserve.'"

"They send round that sort of thing to bring in purchasers," said Van Dorp innocently.

And sub-consciously her father thought that young Van Dorp was an unusual young man.

"Come in, Van Dorp," he said, as they left the carriage. "Perhaps we'll have some music. Perhaps we'll find something in the dining-room—

"Better than Mrs. Applethorpe's pearls dissolved in vinegar?"

"I confess that dinner—well, well, October's too early to be back in town even to meet a hero. But now we're here we'll stay on, I think. Yes, come in. I'd like to read you a few paragraphs of my dissertation on the "Vertiginous enthusiasms of the cormorant—"

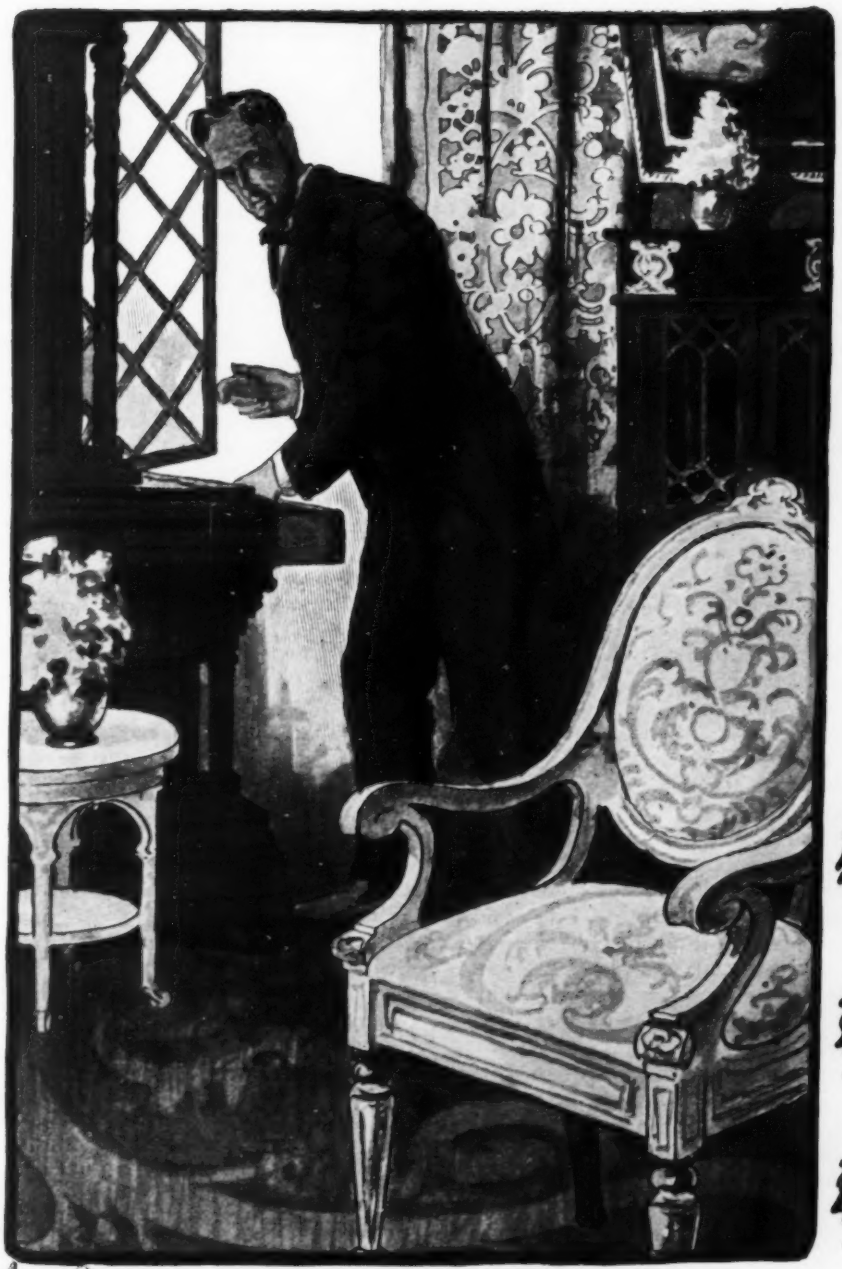
"If it's not too late," said Van Dorp, seizing his opportunity with both hands.

"I myself never take anything stronger than mineral water," said the host. "In my position—the example, you know—But I have a little cordial, which Rosemary made herself from the cherries and rose-hips in our summer garden, that may aid the digestion of a very poor dinner," with such and similar words gratifying the expression of what he considered two fine peculiarities, that of surrounding himself with younger men, and that of leading the simple life.

A little agitated, however, by Rosemary's recent remarks, he had half the mind to relax his rule and swallow enough of the cordial to fortify himself for the moment; but he refrained, and proceeded to his dissertation, to which Van Dorp listened, sipping his thimble-glass of fragrance as if it were nectar, and finding it less intoxicating than Rosemary's beauty in her slight dishevelment.

And when by and by she sang, and he turned the leaves, and breathed the delicate perfume of her hair as she bent, it hardly seemed to him that this was the world of every day.

There is nothing known among men that will tell you why love comes or



He unlocked the Secret Drawer and took out the Certificate

goes. Some look that lays hold of the inner soul, some electric contact, the kindling of an unknown nervê—who knows? It is but part of the great mystery of our being here at all. Only as he held her hand at parting—this Rosemary who, when taken abroad by Mrs. Poictiers, had peers propose in London and princes ask her dot in Rome—he felt that all her life lay in the love of this man, a young professor. As for him, and what had befallen him, he knew it when he went away, he knew it when he came again. And in the long walks, the long drives, which the late fall weather allowed them they almost ceased to know if they lived in this world or another.

"Do you know," said Mrs. Poictiers one day to Rosemary's father, "that if ever two young people were in heaven, there they are?"

"I beg your pardon," he murmured, as if he had not heard her.

"It takes fathers to be blind and dense," she said with gay audacity, he being so great a man. "Do you think Almain Van Dorp comes to see you?"

That he came for anything else had not occurred to the great man. He put on his largest glasses and looked at the two with their heads bent together over the new photographs. "Oh no," he said. "Oh no, you are mistaken." But in a moment or two he left the room, and with the door of his library closed behind him, threw himself groaning face down upon the lounge.

He had never dreamed of this. Rosemary had seemed to him something sacred, too high, too holy, for any love but God's and his own. The mere thought of it profaned her. In the sublime selfishness of all his years he had felt Rosemary to be his and his only and always to remain his. Why, what would life be to him without the airy presence, the silvery voice, the perpetual doing of delightful little nothings, the daily and hourly thought for him, the constant uplift, the high standard which never lowered, the exquisite breeding which had come to her from heaven alone knew where?

And yet one had not lived twenty years with Rosemary for nothing. How long was it since he had told a falsehood; since, knowing it, he had tried to overreach or to deceive another; since he had refused a beggar; since he had treated the servants he once treated as slaves with other than gentle consideration; since he had, he, said his prayer night and morning? He was not thinking of this part of the affair, though; perhaps he was not aware of it. But a singular evolution from evil upwards had taken place in his character. But he did not know that one day, looking at the young girl who, coming in from the summer garden had fallen asleep with her lap full of white roses, and struck afresh by the recognition of her lovely innocence and sweetness, he had felt the monstrous gap between himself and her, and had spurred himself that she might not discover his infirmities and to become what her pure eyes might look upon without horror in that inevitable life to come.

And suddenly, as he lay there, a new light burst upon him. What right had he to such a child? By what grace of God had she been given, of all men, to him? Let him be thankful for twenty years of Rosemary. And if she found her happiness with Van Dorp let her have it.

And just then the door opened, and Rosemary came in. She ran towards him with outstretched arms.

"Has anything happened?" she cried. "Are you—"

"Nothing—nothing, my darling," he said rising lumberingly. "I—I am thinking out a problem."

"Papa!" she cried. "I know what it is! I thought, oh, I thought you would be pleased!"

"I am pleased," he said, taking her in his great arms. "But—"

"Oh, papa, dearest, I can't have you feeling so! I will let it all go. Almain and I will just stay good friends, and no more—"

"My precious child, do you suppose that is possible? No, no. The wedding shall be at once. Why not on Christmas day? I like a Christmas-wedding. Too

The Certificate dropped blazing into the Large Brass Tray

soon? Only a fortnight off? A trousseau? You don't need any more clothes as his wife than you have as my daughter. If you do we'll have them later. And in the summer you'll come down to the shore and the garden—"

"Why, papa, darling, of course I shall! Did you think, oh, papa, did you think for a moment that I was going to leave you! If you will let him, Almain is to come here. You are not going to lose me, you are going to have him. And oh papa, he is worth having!"

It was a fortnight later that Rosemary was overseeing the hanging of the wreaths in the windows. The wild snowstorm was raging outside; people hurried along with their parcels; the chimes of Christmas-eve came in tuneful gushes upon the gale. The house was sweet with the odor of balsam boughs, and the smell of Christmas cheer.

"They must be white ribbons this time," she said, "not scarlet. It is half a pity though, red ribbons would so light and warm this snow. But set those great jars of red roses there, for the sake of the passer-by."

Van Dorp was in the library with her father. "I wish," said the elder man, "although I confess that with my principles it is unreasonable, that I had a fortune to give you with my child."

"She is a fortune in herself," said Van Dorp. "But for her sake," he said frankly, "I wish, indeed, you had. But I think we shall rub along."

"I doubt if the possession of great wealth gives great happiness. The people

of enormous fortunes are possessed with devils of unrest. They exhaust pleasure and have to look for new worlds of it, and find it in a considerable amount of what we used to call 'Sin.'"

"Still," said Van Dorp, "there is much enjoyment in a yacht, an automobile," and he watched the rings of smoke floating towards the chimney. "By Jove, sir," he said suddenly, "if you had taken a block of 'Great Reserve' when the advertisement was offered you,—and it must have stood for next to nothing then —Rosemary could wear such pearls as those Mrs. Applethorpe spilled, if you recollect. And they would become her, too!"

The elder man looked up sharply; but he knew at a glance that the other was quite innocent of any knowledge of the "Great Reserve" business. If he had known, and had yet been willing, even at this late day, he should never have had Rosemary.

When he was again alone, Rosemary's father sat thinking till the fire was in red embers and the bells of Christmas-eve had long since ceased pealing. Those pearls would become her truly. "Great Reserve" was now a hundred and forty. If he sold, who would be wronged? If he sold, jewels, autos, country-house and city-palace were hers. At home, the top of the wave; abroad, a fortune that in the present love of money would make her the equal of princes.

He unlocked the secret-drawer and took out the certificate. It would never cross Rosemary's mind how he came by that money. Applethorpe would arrange the sale discreetly. Somehow he shrank from the thought of Applethorpe just now, as Rosemary herself did. She would enjoy no money made in that way—not if she knew it. Well, she might never know it. Bad money—would it help her? Would it hurt her? If it made her like those others with their idle lives, their escapades, their divorces—no, it could not ruin Rosemary, but who knew of what stuff to withstand the allurement of wealth her husband might prove to be!

And yet—what immense wealth he had in his hands that moment! He felt an awe of it at once with a hatred of it. What bitter hours that piece of paper had given him—was still giving him. He thought he had all but forgotten it; but how many times had he waked in the night with a horrid fear of dying and that thing being found in his possession! His head fell upon the table between his hands clasped over that certificate.

Suddenly he rose, took a coal from the embers, and blew it with a ruddy face against the paper; and the certificate dropped blazing into the large brass tray upon his table. It flamed and curled and crisped and blackened and the sparks ran through it like little imps refusing to give up their life.

He was absently stirring the black films with a paper-knife when Rosemary came singing down the hall with the wreaths for his windows on her arm.

"I'm going to hang them myself," he heard her saying. "Why, what is this smoke?" she exclaimed, as she opened the door. "Papa, darling, what in the world have you been doing? Dear heart, how guilty you look! Have you been burning love-letters?"

"I have been working black magic to make you a Christmas present," he said with a somewhat faltering voice. "I am giving you a Christmas gift of the ashes of a great temptation to which your father did not yield, of a great sin he did not commit!"

"It would have been the most beautiful Christmas present in the world, if such a fairy-story could be true," she said. "Anyway, we'll give these ashes loose to the four winds of heaven, and they're all abroad to-night," as she opened the window and let the great gust of snow rushing and eddying past take them and whiten them in their flight. "Sin!" she said, coming back when she had closed the window, and tiptoeing to put her arms round his neck. "Sin! Why you couldn't if you tried!"

And no Christmasing sent out of heaven could have been what in that hour was the knowledge of his child's right to her faith in him.

Their Wedding Day

BY ROBERT G. BELLAH

Author of "A Passion in a Tea-Cup," etc

SILENCE, heavy and portentous, fell. Mrs. Downing clutched her cup and saucer and glared in speechless astonishment across the tea-table at her companion. From her expression one would have surmised that Mrs. Downing was wishing that silence weighed several tons and that it had fallen on Mr. Benton. The offender was palpably mustering his courage as a buffer against the expected attack.

At last Mrs. Downing spoke.

"Really, Jimmy, for spectacular and pyrotechnic idiocy—"

Again the rising waters of her wrath drowned her utterance.

Mr. Benton attempted to bolster up his case.

"The plan struck me as—er—cute," said he, waving a deprecatory hand.

"Cute!"

Mrs. Downing put down her empty cup, looked at Mr. Benton a moment, and then retired behind her handkerchief in a burst of merriment.

Mr. Benton grinned. He felt he was gaining ground and immediately launched forth into a panegyric on his plan.

"It would be so unique, Georgia, so original. It would create a sensation. It has never been done before in all my social experience, and, besides, think of the tender sentiment of the thing."

"Do you call it sentiment? I don't. I call it asininity. Now, listen, Jimmy. I don't want you to think, because I laughed just now, that I am agreeing to your scheme. I'm not; nothing will make me do so. Do you realize that almost everybody we know says I am a fool to have become engaged to you? And what sort of a fool do you suppose that Verplanck woman called me?"

"Stop, Georgia! I once heard Mrs. Verplanck talking to her servants, when she didn't know I was within ear-shot, so it would be tautological to quote any of her profanity."

"Well, it wasn't that word, Jimmy, that she used. It was a worse, far worse, one. She said I was an old fool. Old! Me!"

"Bless my soul, Georgia, what's that woman talking about? She was an old fool herself when you and I were making mud-pies—"

Mrs. Downing raised her lorgnette, and Mr. Benton hastily continued:

"I mean when I was in college and you were making mud-pies."

"Much better, Jimmy; but nowadays there is little use in my denying my age. It's all Elizabeth's fault, it really is. Now that she's engaged, all my artifices go for naught. Jimmy, you wouldn't think I was much over thirty, would you?"

"Only a few years," said Mr. Benton.

Mrs. Downing played with her lorgnette.

"Just turned thirty," amended Mr. Benton with celerity.

Mrs. Downing grasped her lorgnette more firmly.

"Approaching," hazarded Mr. Benton.

Mrs. Downing raised the instrument of torture and gazed through it and Mr. Benton at the back of the chair in which he was sitting.

"Dallying with twenty," he wildly shrieked.

The glare continued.

"Sweet six—" began Mr. Benton.

Mrs. Downing dropped her lorgnette.

"Enough, Jimmy. You have been fibbing the last twenty years and you know it. However, what is the use of looking young when one has a grown-up, engaged daughter. Before Elizabeth was out, I could always banish her to the nursery cloisters, and then say: 'Yes, baby has two teeth,' secure in the knowledge that my caller was unaware that baby had some twenty-odd other teeth to keep the two company, and was at that moment endeavoring to compute how long it would take two men, one of whom runs in one direction four times as fast as the other man pursues the other direction, to reach Kamschatka at the same time. It was a most depressing problem; the answer would come out twenty-nine and one-quarter men. Now, Elizabeth has ceased wallowing in problems and has become one herself.

Mr. Benton accepted another cup of tea and Mrs. Downing did likewise. Mr. Benton glanced furtively at his hostess, attempted to speak, desisted, and finally waxing overbold began carefully:

"Georgia, have we not wandered far afield from the—er—previous—subject of our conversation—the one which somewhat — er — disarranged your wonted equipoise?"

Mr. Benton felt that that word deserved a larger audience than one person.

"I refer," continued he, warily watching for danger signals, "to my delightful plan."

"Once for all, Jimmy, no! Your plan is too fantastic for serious consideration. I have been foolish enough as it is. I have lost more dignity in the last few weeks than I have ever lost before. First I accept you, then I permit our engagement to be announced at the same time as Elizabeth and Franklin Searles announce theirs. I shall never forget the shock it gave me to see my engagement set forth in one paragraph and Elizabeth's, my own daughter, in the next. It was positively—"

"Indecent," said Mr. Benton.

"No, Jimmy, dear, your mind has wandered. I was discussing the announcement, not your usual conduct."

"There you go, Georgia, twisting innocent remarks of mine into two-edged swords."

"Jimmy, your temper and your metaphors have become mixed, to the detriment of both. Speaking of temper, mine will surely be most violently aroused if you persist in trying to persuade me to agree to your plan."

Mr. Benton looked mournful.

"For Heaven's sake, Jimmy," continued Mrs. Downing, "be reasonable. Here are you and I—unyoung, let us say. We have become engaged. I have a *débutante* daughter, also engaged. To have a mother and daughter both engaged at once is ridiculous enough, in all conscience; but you, not content with that, have the effrontery to ask me to become the town laughing-stock."

"My love," began Mr. Benton.

"Don't call me your 'love!' I'd almost rather be called your 'affinity.'"

"Would it not be nice to effect a pleasing compromise by calling you 'My lovely affinity?'"

"It would, if I, as well as you, had softening of the brain. If I had, I'd do what you want me to do; but I wont."

"Georgia, I'm sure Edward would approve. Your late husband would like to have his wife and daughter both—"

"Nonsense! Edward's mind ought to be, and probably is, on higher things than our marriage."

"Asbestos is expensive these days," murmured Mr. Benton.

"Now it isn't so bad as all that, Jimmy. Edward had his faults—multitudinous ones — but he really was only interestingly bad, so I think he hardly deserves the asbestos treatment. Besides," concluded Mrs. Downing triumphantly, "puns are the lowest form of wit."

"And therefore the foundation of all wit."

"And, like foundations, require bores to sink them to their proper level."

"Of course, Georgia, if I'm—"

"No, you're not, Jimmy, so don't get huffy, as Franklin would say. You are most amusing; but understand, once for all, I wont have a double-wedding with my own daughter. Now, that's settled. Let's have more tea. We are so perturbed.

I'll make it Russian; a little tea and a great deal of Russian."

"Thanks, Georgia, it's good of you to give me tea, even if you don't give me obedience. And to think, I had planned so many of the details!"

Mrs. Downing sniffed.

"I presume you were going to have that feline Verplanck woman and her granddaughter as the maids of honor, and the bridesmaids were to be a bevy of Elizabeth's girl-friends wheeling invalid-chairs in which were to sit my doddering old friends who were past walking."

"One still walks, Georgia, even at your—"

Mr. Benton felt a cold eye upon him, hesitated, and then finished:—"change in the weather."

"Not so marked as the change you have just made in the subject."

"There, there, Georgia, my temper is too angelic to quarrel with you. Haven't you noticed, since our engagement, how difficult it has been for you to make me angry?"

DRAWN BY DAVID ROBINSON

Elizabeth

"One would think, Jimmy, that I spent my time in beating you."

During the last two or three moments Mr. Benton had felt himself gradually growing sentimental. This remark of Mrs. Downing's seemed to give him the desired opening. He verged on the maudlin.

"'Twere bliss to be beaten by those—" he began.

Mrs. Downing's gaze became arctic.

"In my day, I have heard labored speeches, but I think that seldom have I been called upon to listen to one that—"

"Comes more directly from the heart," finished Mr. Benton fatuously.

"Was more idiotic," supplemented Mrs. Downing.

Mr. Benton placed his cup and saucer on the table, removed some belated traces of tea with his serviette, and then paused.

"What do you think I am about to do, Georgia?" said he.

Mrs. Downing gazed upon his preparations with a comprehending eye, and answered:

"From the indications, I judge that you are to about to make elephantine, not to say mastodonic, love to me."

Mr. Benton rose hastily, and perched himself on the arm of her chair. All her flippancy and frigidity vanished.

"You are nice, Jimmy, and I really love you a great deal. I love you for all your pompous ways, and your dear, variable temper, and your reliability. You are a comfort, Jimmy, and I like you near me, dear."

Jimmy placed his arm around Georgia, and gazed fondly at her.

"Georgia, I wonder what I love you for. First—well, because you are you, I guess. Then you do such fascinating things. You rend me limb from limb conversationally. It's horribly fetching, Georgia. And you're so calm and even—and—and—"

Mr. Benton administered a hug, and then whispered:

"This is comfy, isn't it?"

"Yes, Jimmy, dear, awfully comfy. Do you know what Elizabeth calls the first few weeks of an engagement?"

"No. What does my step-affianced-daughter-in-law-to-be call the first few weeks of an engagement?"

"She calls them the honey-spoon. Isn't that a lovely expression? Oh, Jimmy, dear, we are going to be happy, aren't we?"

"We are, Georgia — happy till all things end."

The hug became closer and closer, eyes gazed into eyes, then—

A giggle sounded from the door-way. Mr. Benton made a flying leap into the middle of the room.

"Really, Elizabeth," said he, "after the things I might have seen you and Searles do if I hadn't shuffled my feet most audibly before approaching you, I should think—"

Elizabeth wasn't the least bit impressed.

"Really, Uncle Jimmy," mimicked she, "after the things I have seen you and mumsey do, and then have tiptoed out, and then have shuffled my feet most audibly, and then have come back again with a bland air, I should think—

"Anyway, I love to see you and mumsey happy, so don't mind me. I had to hurry in for I had the very grandest scheme. I couldn't wait to tell you. Mumsey, dear," administering a kiss on the top of her mother's head, "you've got to say 'Yes.' Of course you will, though, so it's all settled. Let's plan the details now."

"Elizabeth, the way you jump about from subject to subject is positively kangaroo-esque. What are you talking about? What am I supposed to have agreed to? Tell me."

"Now, don't get scoldy-scold, mumsey. It's the loveliest plan, and I know you'll like it. You can't help it, now can you, pet?"

"Not being versed in mental telepathy, I haven't the faintest idea what you mean. If it's a lovely scheme, of course I shall agree to it, and so will Uncle Jimmy. Do tell us."

"Well, now listen carefully, mumsey, and see whether you don't think you have a terribly clever daughter. You see, you and I are both engaged, aren't we? And it all happened the very same day, didn't it? And then we all announced it at the very same time, didn't we? So it struck me that as, so far, we had been—er—neck and neck, as Franklin says, it would be the loveliest, cutest plan to—"

During this speech, Mr. Benton had felt himself growing cold with foreboding. He cast a surreptitious glance at Mrs. Downing and noted the presence of a stony calm. He arose with elaborate aimlessness and sauntered carelessly to a position behind Mrs. Downing. From this retreat he gesticulated violently at Elizabeth in an effort to prevent her plan from being broached. That young lady gazed open-eyed upon his performance but continued.

"—loveliest, cutest plan to go right ahead, and both be—

"Uncle Jimmy, dear, when you come into the family, are you going to bring all of that Saint Vitus' Dance with you? What is the matter? Why are you wig-wagging at me like a whole signal corps?"

Mr. Benton experienced a change of heart.

"How odd of you, Elizabeth," said he, in a tone that suggested the dallying of Spring-zephyrs with delicate flowers, "I wasn't wigwagging—a most uncouth expression, my dear. I was—er—er—" seizing a doily from the table, "I was brushing some crumbs away," and Mr. Benton elaborately plied the doily.

Elizabeth tittered.

Unknown to her daughter and Mr. Benton, Mrs. Downing had been gazing through her lorgnette into a mirror in front of her, and had witnessed all of the antics of Mr. Benton.

"Elizabeth," said she, "your Uncle Jimmy has left the shores of truth, and has embarked upon an ocean of mendacity. The up-flinging and down-hurling of his arms was to induce you to stop. You were about to say that you fancied the idea of our having a double-wedding, weren't you? Well, we wont. Your Uncle Jimmy and I threshed out the subject—"

DRAWN BY DAVID ROBINSON

"To have a mother and daughter engaged at once is ridiculous"

"And I," said Mr. Benton, *sotto voce*.

"—before you came in, and I expressed my opinion most forcibly. I wont consider it, so let us have no more discussion of it. Nothing will induce me to consent —nothing. To change the subject abruptly, there's the bell. I am convinced it's that Mrs. Verplanck. Is it a woman's voice? No? Are you sure? Why, who can it be? Don't look as if you were listening. Is it—really? Is it? Why, yes, it is. How are you, Franklin? We're very glad to see you. We thought you were out for a whole day's trip. Did you leave the gasoline behind or did the gasoline leave you behind?"

Franklin Searles shook hands with Mrs. Downing and Mr. Benton, hugged Elizabeth, and then with a laugh turned again to Mrs. Downing.

"No, Mrs. Downing," said he, "it behaved beastly well. Unusual of it, wasn't it? I was all the way up to Tarrytown, and I got struck with a bang-up idea—er—a good idea, I mean, and I had to turn around, and come straight back, by Jove! to tell you."

"My family and my family-to-be seem to be fruitful in ideas to-day." Mrs. Downing's glare impaled Mr. Benton. "I hope, Franklin, it is of better quality than the ideas of Elizabeth and Uncle Jimmy."

"Oh, mine's a scrumptious one—er—a stunner; you can't help liking it. It struck me suddenly all of a heap, and bowled me over completely. And as I was chauffing—"

"You were what?"

"Chauffing—you know—driving the caboose, I turned on the head of a pin, and started back hell over breakfast—oh, I say, Mrs. Downing, I didn't mean to say that. I'm beastly sorry. It's hard to keep your speech from being polluted

by the language of the people who just don't get run down by the car. I'm—"

"Go on, Franklin. I should say that pedestrians and your immortal soul were alike in grave danger. However, I'll forgive you this time. There have been occasions when even Jimmy has— But go on."

"Well, I did the return-trip in less than an hour, with two dogs up and four hens to go. If you hear a ring at the bell, it's probably the last cop—that is to say policeman—that chased me. And here I am. Now for the corking scheme. It occurred to me that it was blasted funny —er—odd—that the whole bunch—all four of us, I mean, should have done the trick—you know—become engaged at same time. Deuced queer, wasn't it?"

A chilling silence prevailed. Mr. Searles looked expectantly around for a spontaneous agreement with his words. He didn't find it, but continued manfully:

"Aw—so I thought we'd better all hands around in the grand chain and get married in one and the same mad whirl."

Mr. Searles gazed facetiously at his friends. Liquid ammonia would have produced a warm sensation with the room at its present temperature. An icicled quiet succeeded the dying away of the sound of Mr. Searles' voice. Mr. Benton's nervousness reached such an acute stage that he felt he must have some relief, so he leaned over and jiggled a cup in its saucer.

"Stop, Jimmy," said Mrs. Downing in a queer voice, "my nerves can stand no more."

Another pause, and then with common consent, everybody except Franklin laughed weakly, in a helpless sort of way. That young man regarded the mirth with an uncomprehending stare.

"I say," remarked he, aggrievedly, "I'm pretty stupid, I know, and dopey, but—er—really—"

"Take him away," gasped Mrs. Downing, "take him away, Elizabeth, or I shall fall upon him and slay him!"

Again she subsided into a muffled chortle.

A dazed and wondering and ruffled young man was led meekly into the adjoining room by a shaking girl, and Jimmy and Mrs. Downing were left alone in a stillness which was frequently broken by bursts of merriment.

"'Out of the mouths of babes,'" began Mr. Benton.

"Meaning Franklin or Elizabeth or yourself?" queried Mrs. Downing.

Suddenly the laughter faded from Mr. Benton's countenance. Unfortunately, his mouth remained open, but this merely served to indicate how abrupt the change was.

"Yes, Jimmy, I can see it," said Mrs. Downing, "and I am much relieved to learn that you really have all thirty-two of your teeth."

The offending mouth closed with a snap. Mr. Benton rose and swept majestically across the room to his erstwhile perch on Georgia's chair. He leaned over and whispered into her ear. His first tactful words brought a smile of delight to Mrs. Downing's face and she impulsively laid her hand on his. At the next few words the hand was hastily withdrawn and a look of disapproval succeeded the delighted smile. Mr. Benton talked and talked in a mounting climax of earnestness. The disapproval deepened, then wavered, then deepened again, then faded gradually. Mr. Benton redoubled his efforts.

"You see," said he, "I'm growing older every day, and so are—"

Mrs. Downing's expression became a warning. Mr. Benton waxed wary, and carefully picked his way along, as one selects the cobblestone oases in crossing a muddy street.

"—are—are—and so are—are—is—is —it is, and so it is necessary to hurry," concluded he, reaching the conversational sidewalk with much success. More whispering and yet more. Mrs. Downing's face showed a growing determination, and finally she rose.

"Jimmy, I'll do it. I'm an old fool, as Mrs. Verplanck says, but I'll do it. Come on!"

Evidently Mr. Benton did not expect such a rapid and complete capitulation, for it cost him an effort to grasp the situation.

DRAWN BY DAVID ROBINSON

"I did the return trip with two dogs up and four hens to go"

Mrs. Downing continued: "As you say, I refuse to be married with Elizabeth, and you and I don't want to wait, until Spring, and we could give her a splendid wedding, if we were already married. But, Jimmy, dear, that doesn't weigh with me so much. It's because of the romance of the thing. And, besides, I love you a great, great deal, dear. That's it, Jimmy, it's my love for you."

"Dear Georgia!"

"Come on, Jimmy, we mustn't waste time, and we've got to escape Elizabeth and Franklin."

"I'll swear out a license."

"Good gracious, one doesn't swear out a license; one swears out a warrant. For Heaven's sake, don't make a mistake. One procures a license, but you don't need one. Hurry—Oh, is that you, Elizabeth? Lovely thing you were just playing."

"I wasn't playing, mumsey."

"Oh, weren't you? Well, it doesn't matter. Uncle Jimmy and I are going for a walk."

"In that gown, and just listen, it's simply pouring!"

"Well, we've always loved the rain, and it helps tea-gowns to get them wet. It—er—cleans them."

"Mumsey! Uncle Jimmy! What ails —"

"We're going to the opera," said Mr. Benton, nobly coming to the rescue.

"Opera! I'm afraid you will be a trifle late for the matinée: it started about three hours ago."

"Elizabeth, be quiet! One never reaches the opera on time: it isn't the thing."

"But, mumsey, shall I order the carriage?"

"No," said Mrs. Downing hastily, "we wont be long. Besides, one can't enjoy walking in the rain when one is in a carriage, can one? What am I saying? Elizabeth, get me my long coat, there's a dear."

Elizabeth departed wonderingly. "I think they have Russian tea *delirium tremens*," said she to the stair-carpet.

Georgia and Jimmy availed themselves of Elizabeth's absence to escape. Mrs. Downing donned Franklin's fur autocoat on her way to the door. A mystified face peered from between the *portières*.

"By—Jove! She's pinched my coat. I wish Elizabeth would come back and hold my hand. I'm a Daniel in a den of thieves, or Ali Baba, or whoever the chap was. Gee! Ta, ta, coat!"

Meanwhile the runaways were rapidly walking up the street.

"Georgia, they may follow us, because I don't think our actions were marked by much sanity, so let's dodge around two or three streets to get them off the scent."

"Speaking of scent, I wish Franklin had kept this coat and his gasoline in separate compartments. Also, I'm nearly dead carrying this weight, but I suppose you are right."

A half-hour later a bedraggled couple wearily passed under the lich-gate of the odd little church.

"Georgia," said Mr. Benton, "you stand here by this door, and I'll run in and make arrangements."

"Hurry, Jimmy, dear, I'm frightfully nervous. I can't bear to have you leave me."

"There! There! I sha'n't be gone long."

He returned in a moment. A frown dwelt upon his brow.

"Georgia, we'll have to be married by one of the curates. The rector is busy."

"Well, never mind, I shall faint if I have to wait another second. Where shall I go?"

"This way—over here."

They hurried over to one of the cubby-holes of the queer little church, and there stood the curate flanked by the two necessary witnesses—a scrub lady and a window-cleaning gentleman. Little could be distinguished in the twilight gloom of the place.

The sweet and pure and holy service was soon finished, and Mr. and Mrs. Benton, in the silence of perfect happiness, moved toward the door.

By-and-by he spoke.

"You're mine, Georgia, mine for always." Then with a whimsical touch: "We're really and truly married, dear, even if we did have to content ourselves

with the curate. I wonder whether the other couple that the rector was marrying are as happy as we."

"I don't know, Jimmy, dear. Heaven is fairly large; I guess there's room for two more. Here they come now. I should like to see the bride. I love everybody just now."

The two couples met at the door and passed into the lighted vestry together. Four shrieks rent the air.

"Elizabeth, how dare you!"

"Well, mumsey, you mustn't scold. I just couldn't wait, and evidently you couldn't either, and I'm going to cry, and I'm too happy for words—so there!"

In one second more bride was hugging bride and groom was almost hugging groom.

"We did have a double-wedding, didn't we, mumsey, after all—and please give Franklin back his coat as a wedding-present, because he's nearly frozen."

Breed of the Sea

BY JOHN BARTON OXFORD

Author of "Queechy the Unsaintly," etc.

IT WAS late in the evening when the October gale, which had lashed the little island all day, began to subside. The rain suddenly ceased; the angry screaming of the wind grew less pronounced; a feeble star shone now and then through the flying wrack of clouds in the sky. The steady, pulsating boom of the surf upon the beach was less menacing in its note.

Captain Elisha Wakeman, stretched on the four-poster bed in an upper room of his big house near the shore, stirred uneasily and opened his eyes. The little clock, ticking away stolidly on the wall, had just struck ten; the fire in the air-tight stove crackled importantly; the lamp, turned low on the stand near the bed, shed a subdued light over the array of bottles and medicine glasses; in the big, hollowed easy-chair by the window, Captain Daniel Holman, Wakeman's watcher for the night, sprawled his big frame and dozed intermittently.

As Wakeman's feverish eyes took in every familiar detail, he turned his head toward the window and uttered a sound which was half sigh and half impatient grunt. The man in the chair came suddenly erect, blinking the sleep from his eyes.

"You awake, 'Lish?'" he demanded. "Anything you want?"

"No, I guess not," the invalid returned. "Moderatin' some outside, aint it? Stopped rainin', too. Guess the blow's most over. Wind'll be round to the nor'-ard by mornin'."

Holman pushed up the curtain beside him, and looked out critically at the sky; then he turned towards the four-poster where Wakeman was pulling nervously at the patchwork coverlet.

"Feelin' some better after your nap, 'Lish?'" he inquired solicitously.

Wakeman eyed the other grimly. "I guess I'm feelin' as well as I ever shall, Dan," he said in a dry voice.

"I shouldn't go to talkin' like that," his watcher urged soothingly. "It'll be different with you in a week or so." He turned his back to the bed as he spoke.

Wakeman sniffed impatiently. "What's the use of sayin' things you know you don't mean," he said with irritation. "An' what's the good of tryin' to put off some-

thin' we got to face sooner or later? I aint goin' to get over this. I know it, an' you know it, an' Doc Bradley knows it best of all. He's as good as told me a dozen times."

Holman wheeled sharply from the window. "I wish you'd have another doctor," he confessed. "I wish you'd have one over from the mainland. Bradley may be all right, but I should feel a good sight easier if you'd let me send for someone else. Why wont you, 'Lish?' "

"Bradley's just as good as any of 'em," said the sick man with conviction. "My time's come, an' that's all there is to it. All the doctors between here an' the Horn wouldn't do me no good."

"I aint so sure of that," Holman persisted.

"Well, I am if you aint," Wakeman snapped. "I tell you I aint goin' to be no better. I'm done for this time an' there aint no use tryin' to get round it. I aint afraid to die, Dan. Don't you get that idea for a minute. But what gets me is this way of dyin'—this layin' here an' waitin' for it to come. If I could get out an' tackle it 'twouldn't be so hard. I hadn't never counted on goin' this way." He twisted on his pillows and threw out his thin hands in a gesture of impatience. Holman watched him uneasily.

"I don't come of a breed that die in their beds," he went on. "They don't know how to. There was father, drowned off Hatteras; an' his brother Tom went down with the old *Flyin' Breeze* in the Bay of Biscay; an' both my brothers was lost at sea, one on a whaler an' the other up to Labrador on a fisherman. That's the way I wanted to go when my time come—not layin' in bed like an old woman."

His eyes were glistening. In his excitement he had struggled weakly to one elbow. Holman, in genuine alarm, crossed the room and strove to force him back to the pillows, but Wakeman's blood was up. He pushed the other away and by sheer force of will managed to sit up in the bed.

"You listen to me," he said imperiously. "I got a proposition to make to you. I'm sick of layin' here, waitin' an' waitin' an' waitin'. Another week of it an' I'll go clean crazy. I can't stand it an' what's more I aint goin' to. You needn't look at me that way. I aint out of my head. I'm as sane as you are. Dan, you can make it easy for me if you're a mind to. Will you?"

His voice trembled in his eagerness. Holman, wide-eyed, surveyed him doubtfully.

"I dunno," he said weakly. "What is it you want me to do for you?"

Wakeman pushed back the thin gray hair from his forehead. "You'd ought to understand how it is," he said. "You'd ought to know how I feel. I can't lay here like this, helpless, dyin' by inches. I got to *do* somethin'. I want you to take me down to the shore an' put me in the whale-boat an' h'ist the sails."

"Want me to put you in the whale-boat an' set you adrift!" the other gasped in dismay.

"I never said I wanted you to set me adrift," Wakeman dissented. "I want you to prop me up by the tiller an' h'ist her sails. What I want to do is to go out an' meet it like a man. Will you do it, Dan, will you?"

Holman came over to the bed and laid a gentle hand on Wakeman's shoulder. "There, there, 'Lish,' you try an' see'f you can't get in another nap," he advised.

But Wakeman's eyes were glowing like live coals. "I tell you I know what I am talkin' about an' I mean just what I say," he said, his voice rising sharply. "It aint much to ask of you, Dan. Seem's if you might do that much for me. I can't stand it, layin' here. It'll be all right. You can tell Doc Bradley to-morrer that you went to sleep in the chair an' when you woke up I was gone. What do you say? Will you?"

" 'Taint likely I will. I can't," Holman declared.

"Can't? Why can't you?" Wakeman inquired with asperity. "Look here, Dan, you know how I'm fixed; you know how much vessel-stock I've got in the desk down-stairs. I'll make it all over to you. I'll give you every last bit of it if you'll do what I ask."

Holman's head went back; he drew himself up stiffly. "You'd ought to know

me better than *that,*" he reminded the man on the bed, but in his concentration of the moment Wakeman gave no heed to the tone.

"What *will* you do it for?" he asked.

"There aint nothin' that would tempt me to do it," the other slowly replied.

"Nothin'?" said Wakeman blankly with childish disappointment in his voice.

"Nothin'?" Holman repeated. "You'd oughter know that, 'Lish.'"

Wakeman sank back on the pillows and lay there in silence for a time, his thin fingers working incessantly. At length his face lighted; he cleared his throat huskily.

"Dan," he said.

"Yes."

"Tell you what I'll do."

"Well?"

"You'd feel better if I had the doctor over from the mainland, wouldn't you?"

Holman was all attention now. "Now you're talkin' sense," he said.

"Well," Wakeman's mouth wore a sardonic grin, "we'll fix it this way: Get the cards an' we'll play cribbage—one hand. If you win, I'll have a doctor over from the mainland; if I win, you'll take me down an' put me in the whale-boat. Have you got the nerve to chance it?"

Holman sat up in the chair and stared incredulously. His under jaw dropped; he seemed loath to believe his ears.

"'Lish,'" he said solemnly, "do you know what you're talkin' about?"

"I keep a-tellin' you that I aint out of my head," Wakeman insisted irritably. "I've been thinkin' this thing over for a week or more an' my mind's made up. Are you goin' to get the cards, or aint you?"

For a time Holman sat huddled in his chair, turning over in his mind the preposterous proposition. Wakeman watched him in nervous anxiety.

"You might as well leave it to luck, Dan," he urged at length. "I shall die anyway if I keep on layin' here, an' if you win, you'll at least have the satisfaction of havin' another doctor over."

Slowly Holman got out of his chair. He went to the bureau, opened the top drawer and took out a deck of cards.

"'Lish,'" he said, "I'm goin' to chance it. I aint no ways satisfied with what Doc Bradley is doin' for you. I believe there's a chance for you, if you had a doctor who really understood what ailed you; an' because I do believe that way, I'm goin' to try a chance with the cards."

He drew the stand close to the bed and transferred the bottles to the window-sill.

"Cut for deal," he said quietly, laying the cards beside the lamp.

Wakeman's eyes gleamed his satisfaction. Painfully he propped himself on an elbow again and cut the pack. On the other side of the table Holman followed suit.

"Mine's a nine spot," said the latter. "What's yours? A tray? Deal, 'Lish.'"

In tense silence Wakeman dealt the cards; in silence the two discarded; still in silence Holman cut the deck and Wakeman turned up the starter.

"Count your hand," said Wakeman, with something like triumph in his tone.

The other spread his cards on the table. "Fifteen two, fifteen four an' three are seven," he said, licking his dry lips.

Wakeman tossed his own cards onto the stand. "Fifteen two, fifteen four an' eight are twelve! I've got you, Dan, I've got you!"

He sank back onto the pillows; his hands trembled in the tension of the moment, but the look of discontent, which his face had worn since the beginning of his illness, had utterly vanished.

It was some minutes before Holman arose from his seat, and, when he did so, his face was white and drawn.

"When were you countin' on goin', 'Lish?'" he asked unsteadily.

"To-night," Wakeman replied, "the sooner the better."

"It's blowin' a good deal yet," Holman reminded him.

"Let her blow," was the grim rejoinder. "Did you think I wanted to start my last voyage in a ca'm? Those are the very things I'm lookin' for—a blow an' rough water. Fetch me my clothes an' help me get into 'em."

It was a half-hour later that, after considerable effort on the part of both

men, Wakeman was finally dressed. Over his clothes was drawn a suit of oilskins and the flaps of a sou'wester were tied beneath his chin. Without a word Holman lifted the wasted form in his arms, tiptoed noiselessly down the stairs and bracing himself against the wind, went out into the gusty night.

Stumbling along with his burden, he made his way to the shore. At the pier in the little harbor lay Wakeman's whale-boat, straining at her moorings. Holman made a pile of old tarpaulins in the stern and on these he gently laid his burden.

"Put a couple of reefs in her," Wakeman commanded, and Holman did as he was ordered. Then he hoisted the sail and trimmed in the sheets, careful that everything was as it should be.

Wakeman, stretched on the tarpaulins, followed his every move with catlike eyes. "All right, Dan," he said when the work was done. "Step ashore now and cast off. I'm much obliged to you. I sha'n't forget what you've done for me. This is something like—this dyin' like a man. Good-by, Dan."

He held up a thin hand, which Holman grasped and crushed in his own big paw. Then, with a choking lump in his throat, Holman stepped to the gunwale and with an effort scrambled clumsily upon the pier.

"All right, 'Lish?' " he called down to the man below him.

"All right, Dan," came the response. "Cast off!"

With shaking hands Holman untied the painter. In the stern of the whale-boat Wakeman put the helm down; slowly her head swung away from the pier; then her sails filled with a sharp crack; she shot away from the pier and slid out into the deeper darkness of the harbor.

Holman stood straining his eyes through the night until the little craft was lost to view. Then with unsteady steps he stumbled along the path that led up from the harbor.

It was a month later that Captain Daniel Holman, opening his mail at the island postoffice one afternoon, came across a letter in a cramped, familiar hand. For fully a minute he stared at it blankly, scarce daring to believe his eyes. For verification he turned to the signature, read it, gasped, and then going back to the first page read again, eagerly, as follows:

"DEAR DAN—

"No doubt you'll get a shock when you receive this letter from me. You've probably had me at the bottom of the sea this month past. But here I be, despite it all, alive and getting better.

"I had a great run of it that night I left the island in the whale-boat. At four o'clock the next morning I was abreast the light-house on Whale Island and at six I rounded Rocky Point. Just below there I fell in with a fisherman, bound eastward, and thinking I was in distress, I suppose, they hove to and took me aboard.

"I guess I was too weak to make any fuss about it. I remember when they lifted me up over the rail, but after that everything was blank till I found myself here at the hospital at Sandport and feeling a lot better.

"I guess you were right after all about Doc Bradley. The young doctor here, who has charge of my case, says I'm worth a dozen dead men, and that he's going to have me on my feet in two months.

"If you can find time, why don't you run over some day and see me. It would do your eyes good to see how much better I am.

Yours,
"E. P. WAKEMAN."

Captain Daniel Holman let out a whoop of joy that startled the loafers perched on their barrels, rushed out of the office, and tore down to the wharf just in time to catch the afternoon-boat for Sandport.

The Elopement of Naneen

BY HARRIET GAYLORD

THROWING a few necessities into a grip and his prospects at Goldfield, Nevada, to the winds; speeding hurry-skurry across the continent to New York, only to find the last Saturday steamer gliding with majestic indifference away from her pier; chartering a tug and chasing her down the bay; climbing on board and demanding a passage; pacing up and down the deck during the voyage with ill-concealed disgust that in the year 1906 the snail-like human mind had not yet solved the pressing problem of Europe in twenty-four hours; at Plymouth rushing before anyone else over the gangplank, through the customs, and into the boat-train; sitting there consulting his watch and saying scornful things to himself about British locomotion; finding London at its hazy best on a June morning; throwing himself into a hansom and shouting "123 Pall Mall" to the cabman —all this because Bruno Rogers, two summers before had met a blue-eyed, seventeen year old slip of a girl from New York at a house party in Oakland and when she persisted in saying "No" to his twenty-five year old wooing, had told her:

"When you change your mind, Naneen, write 'yes' on a post-card, and I'll come at wireless speed whether you're at the North Pole or the source of the Nile."

She had laughed and answered:

"Oh, I sha'n't send for you, Bruno. You're awfully good fun, but daddy means I shall marry an English lord, you see. He's got a fearful Anglophobia. I don't want to marry anyone at all, but he'd surely cut me adrift if I should mention a plain Wild West mining-engineer."

"But if he'd let you, you'd just as soon marry me, wouldn't you?"

Her eyes grew very mischevious.

"You're a dear, shaggy dog of a man, Bruno boy. I love the way your mane curls over your forehead, and the faithfulness in your eyes. But I don't want to marry any male, masculine man that ever breathed! Come and play golf."

She had never written him, and at the report that her father had bought up a half-dozen or so of English castles and was rapidly buying his way into the English aristocracy, Bruno had set his jaw defiantly and made his modest pile. Just when prospects were booming and there was a chance of his going over in another year to woo again his expatriated first and only love, his brain, heart, and six-feet-three of brawn, bone, and muscle were set a-quiver by a cablegram:

Yes yes yes. Come immediately. Don't answer. Just come. Be cautious. Say nothing to any one. Letter at Brown Shipley's, London. Come immediately. Am in danger. Want to talk to you. Yes yes yes.

NANEEN.

As he leaped from the hansom and rushed into Brown, Shipley & Company's, it seemed as if he had been centuries in his progress from Nevada, and all direful disasters might have occurred in the interim. Thank God, England was slow and conservative! He might yet be in time. Back he came through the door, the letter in his hand.

"Drive me to Bond Street, wont you?" he said. "To any good tailor's."

Even at this supreme moment he realized he must not go a-wooing without the requisite toggery.

In the hansom, he tore open the envelope and read:

DEAR BRUNO:

It's just awful of me to summon you like this, but I am desperate. Daddy is bound I shall marry before I am twenty like all our naternal relatives for generations back. He's so afraid I'll be a new woman. He wants me to marry an earl and he's fixed on the man, an awfully good sort, but lean and hungry looking. Of the two evils I choose you. I'm tired of the knocks American girls get in the papers because they buy titles. We've had an awful row, Daddy

and I, because I said I wouldn't marry Lord Northcroft, and he's packing me off to a little place in North Devon called Clovelly. I pretended his harshness was making me ill, so the doctor recommended sea-air. That isn't the worst! I'm to be guarded by two vicious looking spinsters under orders not to let me out of their sight. I think he is afraid I may run off to America. Isn't it a sweet, mediæval situation

Come to Clovelly, Bruno, and we'll look at each other and make some plans. You've got to be awfully cautious. Just be statuesque till I tell you what to do. We shall be at the New Inn but you go to the Red Lion and I'll have a letter there when you arrive. Don't speak to me or notice me till you have read my directions. If I elope with you I shall be awfully poor for Daddy will never forgive me. But I guess you wont let me be sorry.

Your desperate,

NANEEN.

"Bless her!" he said, thrusting the paper back into the envelope, "she knew I'd come. Not one word of doubt in all that letter!"

The hansom had stopped. Bruno grabbed the railway-guide he had secured at the banker's and rushed into the tailor's shop.

"Wait just a minute," he said to the clerk. "I've got to see what train I have to take."

"It's all right," he announced five minutes later. "I've got an hour before I must be at Paddington."

Only when he was on the train speeding westward through an England which seemed to him strangely sophisticated and conventional, did he draw his first free breath since he had been suddenly wrenched from the dogged routine of Goldfield. By the time the sophistication had lessened and Taunton had been passed, all anxiety had been thrown out of the car window, and when they were passing between bumpy plowed fields of the good red earth and pastures full of the good red sheep and black pigs of Devon, Bruno set his shoulders and chuckled with delight as he had when the game was called in his famous halfback college days.

From Barnstable to "the little white town of Bideford" he crawled on a toy train, and there, too impatient to wait for the coach, chartered a private conveyance and sped on to Clovelly. Down the cobbled stairway street of the quaintest town in all England he clumped his way between tiny vine-sheltered, rose-glorified, clambering white and gray cottages, his painfully new luggage engineered on a sort of two pronged sledge by a superannuated old salt who clumped along at his side. Suddenly the swinging sign, "New Inn," surmounted by two impish figures met his gaze, and there on the narrow piazza sat his Naneen, demurely writing letters with one of the spinster dragons on guard. His hand instinctively went to his hat, but at the careless unrecognition in her eyes, he transferred the gesture by implication to the artist who was catching the last sunset tints from his stool in the center of the narrow pathway.

"The Red Lion is farther down, I believe, sir?" he asked in ringing tones.

"Yes, yes. Quite down by the sea. straight on. You can't miss it."

Bruno thanked him and gave one fleeting glance at the girl whose eyes were still so coldly indifferent that he flushed and wondered if she had repented or thought he might have come sooner. He thrust his head back farther than the declivity required as he clumped on down through the fascinating paradise to which his Eve had summoned him, and where she had cut him dead at first sight.

When he reached The Red Lion, standing out in white, uncompromising bareness against the green trees of the steep hillside behind, and with the tide below flowing in to its very rock foundations he paused for a moment to drink in the delight of the scene. The rambling old pier and gate-stairway of stone; the vine-covered cottages with time-painted harmony of color; the fishing yawls and pleasure-boats tugging at anchor in the tiny harbor; the gray, disgusted-faced donkeys; the handful or so of summer people and gossiping groups of Jack-tars in blue jerseys—these were in his immediate foreground, while green and white cliffs stretched out into the open, where seagulls and red-sailed yachts skimmed along in the sunset glory of sea and sky. What a setting Naneen had chosen for the historic moment of his life!

DRAWN BY W. W. CULBY

"It doesn't matter about my clothes: I haven't got to be married"

Then he entered the hotel and found her letter. In his room he tore it open. It was dated a week before.

Oh why don't you charter a flying machine and come quickly, you Bruno man? It's beautiful and desolate here and I shall have to elope with you. The dragons are insufferable and watch me all the time. They are insanely afraid I shall run away with a French artist who tries to divert me at the hotel. You must never speak to me or look at me or they will whisk me off home. Perhaps when I see you, I shall prefer the earl. Two years is a long time. I shall be all eyes till I see you, then I'll tell you what to do.

NANEEN.

It was not altogether satisfactory, but Bruno was not easily discouraged. Stepping through his window upon the little balcony he looked down at the water lapping the stones just below, and at the people strolling here and there on the pier. There were possibilities in that window.

When he had had his dinner he started to climb the stone stairway once more, but stopped at the sound of Naneen's voice. She was coming daintily down the hill in advance of her two guardians. He turned back and loitered up the steps to the pier. At the top he paused and faced her as she came running up to his level.

"Dear Bruno," she murmured, "so glad to see you. I'll drop a note by and by."

Her smile as she sauntered past paid all arrears and put him hopelessly in debt.

At least he could stand and watch his divinity, but it was hard lines for Bruno, the active, to subside into patient passivity. She was behind the spinsters when she went down the steps again, and in the fading light he read the note she dropped at his feet.

Alleluia! Good boy! you're here at last. Can't write much now but I'll drop you a longer note from my window at midnight. Come to the little alley turning to the right four doors below the New Inn. I'm on the top floor of the cottage with all the flower pots in front. The dragons are just below but they begin to sleep audibly at eleven. We can't talk, but come. I'm so glad you've still got those faithful-dog eyes!

NANEEN.

There was never anything quite so dead as Clovelly when Bruno felt his way cautiously up the hill and found the alley. Naneen's light from the small diamond paned windows overlooking the sea, was almost the only one still burning in the little town. She leaned out and threw kisses down to the black figure outlined against the lesser blackness, but he knew he must not speak. She raised her hand and something fell at his feet. Groping, he found a rose, with a wisp of paper about the stem. Then she threw him another kiss and a soft "Good-night," closing the panes so he might not be tempted to reply.

For three days there were constant glimpses of Naneen, with notes, frequent, elusive, charming, very full of promise, but he had not even touched her hand, and the lover in him began to rebel. Such quiescence was new to Bruno Rogers. Angrily he was stumping up the steep "black staircase" when he heard footsteps coming down the narrow tree-enshrouded path before him. Fate had done him a kind turn, and before the girl saw who it was, she was up in his arms and he was kissing her for all the days and weeks and years they both had lived and missed each other. She struggled, then lay still in his arms, then at last gave him back kiss for kiss.

"Oh Bruno," she sighed happily, "you are nicer than the earl. I'd much rather kiss you."

He dropped her suddenly to earth.

"Have you been kissing that man?" he demanded.

"Don't you wish you knew?" she cried, and slipping under his arm escaped down the hill just before the footsteps of her shadows sounded in the pathway above.

That evening when he entered his room after dinner, he was surprised to hear her voice outside.

"Yes, Lord Northcroft, that little cottage was Salvation Yeo's. It's practically the site of the hotel, isn't it? How strange you have never come to Clovelly before!"

Bruno realized she was speaking louder than usual, perhaps to attract his atention. He stepped cautiously out on the balcony in time to hear Lord Northcroft's lazy drawl:

"No inducement till now, you see."

Bruno warily peered over. They were seated on a bench below. Naneen sprang up suddenly, and her eyes held him where he stood.

"Do you mind looking to see if Daddy is coming, Lord Northcroft?" she asked.

As the earl obeyed, she said cautiously:

"Stay where you are, Bruno. Keep out of sight and listen for all you are worth."

"Not a sign of him yet," said Northcroft, returning. "Shall you be sorry to leave to-morrow?"

"Yes. Whatever put it into daddy's head to come down here and drag me home? He is so mysterious."

Northcroft laughed.

"I think he missed you. I think he thought perhaps you'd be tired of your companions."

Naneen tossed her head.

"On the contrary, for the last three days I've enjoyed myself tremendously. But why did you come?"

"To try my powers of persuasion once more. Naneen, wont you please marry me?"

Naneen turned to him suddenly, bewitchingly imperative.

"Look me straight in the eye, Lord Northcroft! There! Now tell me, were you ever really in love so that there was only one person for you in all the world?"

He looked at her in silence, then away over the water, then into her eyes again.

"I want the truth," she said gently.

"You shall have it, Naneen. I was in love that way—once."

"Did she die?"

"No. She married a mediocre solicitor, and is happy with a brood of five children."

"And you—why, Lord Northcroft, you love that woman yet!"

"In the way I loved her then, yes. I happen to be one of those unfortunate duffers with whom that sort of thing goes hard. But everything short of that I could give to you, Naneen. I know no other woman whom I wish to make my wife. I think I could make you happy if you would only try to love me a little."

Naneen spoke impulsively, with childlike simplicity.

"Lord Northcroft, I have loved a man for two years as you loved that woman. I have never told another soul. I have never told even him, but he is the only man in the world for me. My father wants me to marry you, and had I never seen the other man, I could learn to care for you as you wish. But now you would be second best. Lord Northcroft, wont you help me to gain what you have missed—first best with the man I love?"

He looked at her very regretfully in silence—it seemed a long time.

"Yes," he said at last, "I will help you and the other man to gain what I missed, and miss you also myself, little Naneen."

"You dear!" she cried. "You'll be glad afterward that you made us happy. I wish I could marry you both! Ah, here comes daddy. We'll make our plans later."

Bruno drew back as John Hoadleigh came puffing around the corner. He had never seen Naneen's portly father before.

"Amazing how much breath and muscle it takes just to stump down that hill!" exclaimed Hoadleigh.

"That's nothing, daddy, dear. Just wait till you stump up again before you growl. Shall we go out on the pier?"

Without a backward glance she led the men away while Bruno hugged himself from sheer delight. What a way to tell him she loved him! What a way to lift him into a heaven of bliss! What a Naneen!

That night at her window she whispered not "good-night" but "good-by," and he stumbled at breakneck speed down the hill to press her fifth rose in his railway-guide, and tear open her note:

Dear, you heard it all, didn't you? Well, it's true, so it wasn't so awful for me to send for you, was it? I've had another talk with Lord Northcroft. You are to go to him at the Cecil on Friday and do just what he says. His plan to help us is simply romantic beyond words and if you don't think he's the dearest *deus ex machina* (or balloona!) that ever lived, I'll marry him and not you. Your bachelor days are numbered! Good-by, dear. We're leaving early. Don't be visible. I haven't told Lord Northcroft

DRAWN BY W. W. COLBY

you are here; it is our secret. Just follow after we're gone, and the day I see you next will be—the day I come to stay with you for always. Dear! Dear!! Dear!!!

"Ah, Mr. Rogers," drawled Lord Northcroft when Bruno presented himself in due season, "I'm glad indeed to meet such a lucky dog. Do be seated. Now tell me, do you know anything about ballooning?"

"A little in an amateurish fashion. I've made perhaps a dozen ascensions with a friend who has the fever."

"Ah! that is fortunate. Now I've arranged a surprise for my friend Hoadleigh and a little romance to please Miss Naneen. She will like to tell her children one of these days how she was a pioneer in balloon elopement. One might as well be up to date. Hoadleigh has just joined the Aero Club and is quite daffy on the subject, you see, and it has been my fad for three years. I've just imported a new balloon, and Hoadleigh has asked me to test it out at his place, Stretton Court. We have arranged for the ascension Monday afternoon and I'll take you along as my assistant. Miss Naneen goes with us, and we shall drop Hoadleigh—not as ballast but with all necessary courtesy. At our second landing I shall say, 'Bless you, my children,' and return to pacify 'Daddy.' Does that plan meet your approval?"

Bruno's grip of his hand was all emphatic.

During the next two days he and Lord Northcroft were in close consultation, and on Monday, with a good-sized delegation from the Aero Club they left for Warwickshire. Carriages were waiting at the little station, and when they reached the field at the entrance to Stretton Court, Northcroft's men were inflating the balloon and attaching the ballast bags. Bruno went immediately to the bulky yellow chariot of his hopes, which was slowly swelling and tugging at her moorings, while Lord Northcroft was driven swiftly up the long avenue to the court. Presently he came back through the field with Hoadleigh and Naneen, and Bruno's heart thumped a *Te Deum*. Did ever bridegroom before so await his bride? Better this than standing nervously at altar-rail while galaxies of flower-maidens and bridesmaids dizzied one's vision and blunted one's sensibilities. Naneen cast him one deliciously impish look as Lord Northcroft presented his assistant and suavely remarked:

"Hoadleigh, Mr. Rogers is a compatriot of yours."

Thereupon Bruno was sounded by his unsuspecting future father-in-law on the strides made by aeronauts in America.

"Is this your first experience, Miss Hoadleigh?" he asked when everything was ready and Northcroft gave Naneen his hand from the car.

"Yes, indeed. I was down at the shore and my father came to bring me home especially for this."

"Are you frightened?"

"No! I love new experiences. I am sure I can trust myself to you—and Lord Northcroft."

Hoadleigh was too busy transferring his avoirdupois into the basket to observe either her emphasis or her pause.

"We have got good human ballast, anyhow," said Northcroft as Bruno added his two hundred pounds to the cargo. "Sit right here, please, Miss Hoadleigh, between Mr. Rogers and me. There! Let off the bags on that side, Rogers. Now we are ready," he called to the men who were holding down the basket. "Let go, everybody."

Naneen leaned over the edge and saw the green earth jump violently away from the tiny car down into space. Were the people mad that they still smiled and cheered and showed no terror? Amazed, she looked at her father who was watching her in amusement.

"Oh, of course! We're leaving them, aren't we?" she cried. "Why, I shouldn't know we were moving at all. Isn't it glorious?"

More and more distant sounded the cheers. Her ears began to throb and ache, but she hardly realized it in the intoxication of the unknown. It was almost a cloudless day, and as she peered down at the marvelous stage-setting below — plowed field and green forest, silvery river and lake, brown thatch of cottage and gray roof of mansion—she moved imperceptibly nearer to Bruno. It was their world, the throne where their love would be crowned! John Hoadleigh did not see the look which locked their eyes together for one ecstatic instant.

"How far up are we now?" she asked as Northcroft consulted his statoscope.

"Just at a balance, two thousand feet."

"But what makes my voice sound so queer—so chopped off?"

The men laughed.

"Miss Naneen," answered Northcroft, "that is only in your own ears. Your voice would carry miles if there were anyone else up here to hear it. Ah! here's a wind." He threw over a handful of sand as he spoke and up they darted and off into space.

DRAWN BY W. W. COLBY

Staring in open mouthed bewilderment

For two hours they drifted about, sometimes ascending, though the men were chary of sacrificing ballast. Once when a cloud-bank passed between them and the sun, they rushed downwards with alarming rapidity. Then the sun struck them again and the balloon tautened so they were obliged to open the escape valve.

At four o'clock Hoadleigh asked:

"Had enough, Naneen?"

She looked at him reproachfully.

"I could never have enough!" she cried.

"I think we'd better descend, though," said Northcroft. "I'll aim at the field down there near that village."

As he spoke he opened the valve again and Bruno dropped the anchor.

"Good work!" cried Bruno, ten minutes later. "She's a beauty."

"I never made a better landing," declared Northcroft. "Just get out first, wont you, Hoadleigh, and give Miss Naneen a hand?"

As Hoadleigh's weight was safely deposited on the ground, the cable suddenly slipped and the balloon bounded a thousand feet in air, leaving him staring at his two erstwhile companions in open-mouthed bewilderment. But surely there was nothing to worry about with Lord Northcroft and another experienced aeronaut in charge of his daughter. He watched a strong air-current sweep them away towards the north, then trudged through the field and took the train home.

Naneen leaned over the car anxiously.

"Poor old daddy! It's a mean trick to play him, isn't it? Do you think he'll ever forgive me?"

"I'll do my best," drawled Northcroft. "But first I've got to land you two insane conspirators and start you off for Scotland."

"We're moving in that direction," said Bruno, his eyes at last drinking their fill of Naneen. "Why not take us straight to Edinburgh yourself and give away the bride?"

"We'll touch bottom sooner than that, I fancy," shouted Northcroft grimly, as a cold-current struck them and the balloon dropped into a bank of clouds. The sand which the men threw out seemed to move upward, so swift was the rate of descent. Once below the clouds, however, the ballast grew more effective and the balloon sank more slowly on an inclined plane toward a forest. Bruno dropped the anchor and Lord Northcroft opened the valve. The guide rope dragged on the earth.

"Can't make it! We're going to crash down into those trees," cried Northcroft. Don't be frightened, Naneen. We'll land you safely."

He pulled the rip-cord and the mighty sphere above them collapsed instantly. Bruno seized Naneen in his arms as the basket overturned and jumped for a rock. Northcroft was thrown out into a marsh.

"It doesn't matter about my clothes," he drawled, scrambling to his feet. "I haven't got to be married. How about yours?"

"Oh, we're fit," laughed Bruno. "Not so bad a landing after all. How's the balloon? I hope it's not ruined so soon."

"I'll give you news of her after your honeymoon is over. Suppose you and Miss Naneen scramble across those hummocks and send some one to help me from that hamlet off to the north. Then make for the nearest station and leave me to convince Hoadleigh that you are a more desirable son-in-law than I would be. Let me know when you get back to London."

"Come here," commanded Naneen.

He joined them on their rock, his eyebrows quizzically raised.

"It's customary to kiss the bride, isn't it?" she suggested.

Northcroft looked at her curiously and flushed a dull red. Naneen laughed at his confusion, then flung her arms about his neck crying:

"You blessed darling! We both love you awfully for what you've done and always shall."

"There, there, children!" he said, kissing her twice and gripping Bruno's hand. "Don't overwhelm me! Go on and enter your Eden."

From hummock to hummock they jumped, laughing, till they were on dry ground. There they waved a last farewell to Northcroft, then passed out of his sight behind the trees. Bruno stopped abruptly and faced Naneen.

"I am not good enough for you, dearest. That man back there is a nobleman in every sense of the word. You are giving up the whole world for me. Think, before it is too late!"

She annihilated the distance between them and pressed her cheek coaxingly against his coat.

"I can't seem to explain it, Bruno," she apologized, "but it's just love that makes my world, and I love you. Don't jilt me, dear, on my wedding-day!"

"You absurd little midget!" he cried, catching her about the waist and holding her up at arm's length before him. "Did you think I meant it? I'd like to see you try to marry anyone but me."

Then he drew her slowly nearer till her tempting bride-lips met his own.

Afterward they walked on toward a greater Eden.

DRAWN BY W. W. COLBY

Northcroft was thrown out

It was ten o'clock when Lord Northcroft reached Stretton Court.

"Where's Naneen?" cried Hoadleigh in amazement. He passed through all stages of emotion as Northcroft told his story, even to Naneen's appeal to himself for help, and his reason for renouncing his claim to her hand.

At the end he said simply:

"Hoadleigh, you and I know there are not so many happy marriages in the world that we should risk turning young love from its course. Let your girl have what she wants. So many of us miss what she has found."

Hoadleigh sat glowering in the ruins of his hopes. Suddenly his sense of humor asserted itself.

"Blame me!" he said, "if I don't like the pluck of that youngster! I'd have done the same thing myself. And as for Naneen, she's a chip of the old block!"

A Fruitless Preparation

BY RUTH WILSON HERRICK

Author of "The Caledonians," etc.

IS she so very seriously addicted to the habit?" inquired Mr. Jamison, as he lazily filled his pipe and swung back and forth, the old slipper pivoting upon his toe.

Mrs. Jamison paused impressively as she was dealing out her cards for a new game of solitaire.

"A perfect slave to it," she replied with emphasis. "I believe mother would rather knit than—than play for the prize at a card party!"

Mrs. Jamison dealt the last card down upon the table with a determined slap and continued:

"She actually wrote me asking me to buy her seven skeins of red yarn before Tuesday so that she could have them to begin on as soon as she came. How can a woman bear to be governed by a mere habit!"

"Does she come Tuesday?" asked Mr. Jamison reaching for the slipper which had finally fallen off.

With a black ace poised irresolutely in the air, Mrs. Jamison was eyeing like a hawk her right-hand column.

"Yes, Tuesday, May the thirteenth; At home; Two o'clock; Cards; R. S. V. P.," she replied absently.

"What am I saying?" she asked with an abrupt start, as the black ace descended at last upon its prey.

Her husband enveloped his head in a wreath of blue smoke. "Sounds like an invitation to a card party," he remarked nonchalantly. "Is there one on hand?"

"Not that I know of," observed Mrs. Jamison with some sorrow evident in her voice. "I presume I spoke as I did from force of habit."

"Your mother plays cards?" proceeded Mr. Jamison.

"I'm stuck!" cried his wife despairingly.

"No," gathering up her cards preparatory to a new game, "she never stopped knitting long enough to learn anything useful. Still she knits beautifully, and I'm going to have her knit the baby a little white jacket while she's here. I've already bought the pattern for it."

After making several more remarks without eliciting any response from his wife, who was evidently having better luck in her new game, Mr. Jamison crossed his slippered feet and indulged, as was his custom upon such occasions, in a listless nap.

The following Tuesday Mrs. Jamison's mother arrived, bringing with her a score or so of knitting-needles and a correspondingly capacious bag containing, what seemed to Mrs. Jamison, a colossal number of articles ready for the finishing touches.

"If you have those seven skeins of red yarn about here, Mary," she began as soon as she had removed her bonnet and unpacked her bag, "I can start right away on that sweater I wrote you about.

I couldn't find the shade I wanted at home, and I promised Mrs. Louisy Jenning's youngest grandson, William, that he should have it to wear to a ball-game next Monday. The boys have a team and he's the captain of it."

She paused for a moment while she polished her gold glasses upon a round, scalloped piece of chamois skin. The polisher was of use only in the center, for around the edge in uneven gilt letters ran the words, "To dear Mrs. Cooper from William;" but its owner seemed to cherish the article in spite of its disadvantages and wore a proud smile upon her face as she polished vigorously.

"Now, mother," protested Mrs. Jamison, "I hope you're not going to spend your time knitting while you are here. I've told all the ladies that you were coming, and they will expect you to join in with us and be friendly and sociable at our parties and clubs."

"The mail, mum," said an Irish maid entering with a pile of envelopes in her hand.

Mrs. Jamison seized them hastily and sorted them over.

"Two invitations," she said. "Oh, one's addressed to Mrs. Cooper! Here you are, mother."

Mrs. Cooper looked mildly over her glasses as her daughter broke the seal of the one addressed to Mrs. Jamison, but she laid her own invitation carefully upon her lap and continued to cast stitches upon a rubber needle.

"Ha! A card-party at Mrs. Gordon Keats Tuckerman's," murmured Mrs. Jamison in delighted surprise, at the same time making unconsciously a graceful and airy bow to an imaginary hostess.

"Mother!"

Mrs. Cooper started at the sudden change in her daughter's voice.

"You must go," said Mrs. Jamison.

"Well," replied Mrs. Cooper, changing her needles.

"But you can't play!" continued her daughter in some irritation.

"Will it be necessary?" inquired Mrs. Cooper.

"Necessary!" said Mrs. Jamison in a determined voice. "You must learn before that party comes off. What's the date? Let's see. Next Monday. Yes, we can start to teach you to-night and have ample time to practice and get you thoroughly initiated before then."

"I?" said Mrs. Cooper, agitatedly bobbing her gray head. "I learn to play cards, Mary?"

"Why not?" countered Mrs. Jamison.

Mrs. Cooper looked blank for a moment as she felt about for an answer.

"Why," she began rather feebly, "I had a real strict bringing-up, Mary. I actually don't know. Besides, I can't spend the time and get my work done, too. Card-playing is of no use to anyone. Then, too, I was going to start the white jacket for the baby this evening."

"You knit so fast," replied Mrs. Jamison, somewhat mollified, "that you can get plenty done this afternoon, I'm sure. You see, I want you to have a nice time while you're here, and of course you can't have it unless you play cards. Everyone plays here."

Accordingly, that evening Mrs. Jamison corralled her submissive husband and her protesting brother, sent the one after the card-table and the other after a deck of cards, while she herself undertook the task of looking up her mother who had mysteriously disappeared.

Mrs. Cooper was found at last in the nursery fitting a white knitted strip to the baby's back and conversing volubly with the Irish maid upon the respective merits of knitted jackets and flannel kimonas as worn by infants in general and the one on her lap in particular. With much persuasion she was at last induced to leave the entrancing subject and take her place at the card-table where the two martyrs were already seated, indulging, while they waited, in a quiet game of poker.

"Now," said Mrs. Jamison briskly, as she leaned forward in her chair, "the first thing, mother, is to cut for deal."

Mrs. Cooper looked blank.

"Low deals, you know, mother," explained young Cooper wickedly.

"Pick up some cards and see what you get," ordered Mrs. Jamison.

Mrs. Cooper obeyed and the rest fol-

lowed her example, low falling to Mrs. Jamison.

"Now," continued Mrs. Jamison, "I deal three around three times and then four to each for a widow beginning with myself."

"Cinch?" asked Mr. Jamison in some surprise.

"Always at the parties," answered his wife. "Now pick up your nine cards, mother, and we'll start to bid."

"Do you ever play cards at the bridge-parties, Mary?" asked Mrs. Cooper, striving to meet her daughter upon her own ground.

"It's bridge-whist that she plays," explained Mr. Jamison, seeing that his wife was too absorbed in her hand to answer the question. "That's another kind of a game, but they only play it at the bridge-club every other week."

"Now, mother," said Mrs. Jamison, coming to communicative life again, "we are going to play cinch, a simple and easily understood game. In cinch we bid for the privilege of making trumps."

"What is a trump?" ventured Mrs. Cooper timidly.

"A trump—" began Mrs. Jamison bravely, "a trump is—why, what is a trump, anyhow?" she faltered, turning to her brother.

"You were one yesterday," he replied lucidly, "when you had my favorite pie for dinner."

Mrs. Cooper beamed tenderly upon her son through her gold glasses. "You always were so fond of lemon pie," she observed. "Always! Even as a little boy."

"A trump," said Mr. Jamison coming to the rescue, "is a card of the suit that temporarily ranks above all other suits. A trump-card, then, always takes a trick above a card of any other suit, whatever its denomination."

"What is a suit?" inquired Mrs. Cooper.

"Do you know the cards apart?" asked Mrs. Jamison.

Mrs. Cooper, replying in the negative, her daughter collected all the cards from the table and spent an arduous fifteen minutes instructing her pupil in the names of the respective cards.

"Now then," she said, at the end of that time, "it's your turn to deal, mother. Remember it's three—"

"Oh," said Mrs. Cooper faintly, "you mix them up and put them around for me."

When the task was accomplished, Mrs. Jamison, with a barely perceptible sigh, began her instructions.

"There are fourteen points," she said, naming them over carefully. "Now the number of high cards of the same suit that one holds determines the amount that one should bid."

"Let's start to play," put in her brother impatiently. "She can learn as we go along better than she can from any amount of explanations beforehand."

"Very well, mother. You can start the bid," agreed Mrs. Jamison, beginning to look interested.

"What—how many—How do I know when I have good cards?" murmured Mrs. Cooper feeling her ignorance sadly.

"The ace," said young Cooper gently, "the ace, king, queen, jack, and possibly the ten-spot and deuce of one suit would constitute a fairly good hand. Eh, Mary?"

Mrs. Cooper examined her handful of slippery cards with laborious care.

"I think I'd better not—do I have to bid?" she asked.

"Certainly not," responded her daughter. "You can pass if you think best."

The bidding went around the table with remarkable rapidity after Mrs. Cooper had acted on her daughter's advice, and then Mr. Jamison, taking pity on his mother-in-law's perplexity, suggested that they lay down their hands and explain to her the whys and wherefores of their respective bids. A mild commotion was created when it was discovered that Mrs. Cooper had held the ace, king, queen, jack, and deuce of spades. Mrs. Jamison looked offended.

"Why didn't you bid?" she asked her mother. "A fine hand — remarkably fine."

"The ten-spot," explained Mrs. Cooper looking to her innocent-eyed son for championship. "He included the ten-spot in the list, and I didn't have it."

"You were eminently correct," said that young man soothingly, patting his mother's shoulder. "Always act on your son's advice and you'll come out right every time."

"Bless his heart! So I shall," returned Mrs. Cooper with a relieved smile. "By the way, I saw a real pretty pattern for a knitted vest in a magazine to-day, and I thought I'd make you one while I was here. Don't you think you would like a silver gray?"

Mrs. Jamison groaned despairingly. "What shall we do?" she asked. "How can a person become such a slave to a habit?"

"You ought to know," answered her brother warmly. "I think it's a crime, though, to acquaint her with yours in this merciless manner."

"I really think I am beginning to understand it," said Mrs. Cooper meekly. "Sha'n't we go on?"

"Certainly," said Mrs. Jamison, all eagerness again. "Now this time, mother, remember to bid on what you have and not on what you have not. That's simple, I'm sure. Consider the high cards that will be sure to take tricks."

"Does the jack always take a trick?" asked Mrs. Cooper, adapting her remarks to this unfamiliar jargon.

"Not in cinch," replied her daughter, "unless it is the highest card out. In euchre, though, it does. Then the jack of trumps and the jack of the same color are called bowers, and they are high unless the game is being played with the joker, in which case—"

Mrs. Cooper sat looking at her daughter with a pleasant but hopeless smile as she listened to this flood of knowledge. She had already decided that cards were worse than any number of Chinese puzzles, but the vast and unlimited possibilities which arose before her as the evening proceeded appalled her with the realization of her own ignorance.

It was after ten o'clock before she acquired enough courage and comprehension of the unfamiliar game to indulge in the luxury of making a bid by herself; and any attempt on her part to play out her own hand was by common consent at twelve o'clock postponed indefinitely.

"Never mind," said Mrs. Jamison as the four rose, pale and nerve-racked from their seats. "We shall keep her at it for five days more. By that time she surely can manage it—and only think what an honor it would be if she should win the prize at Mrs. Gordon Keats Tuckerman's."

Mrs. Jamison was as good as her word. Her mother for the remainder of the week ate, drank, and slept upon cinch. She was aroused early in the morning to play a matutinal hand with Mr. Jamison and her son before they fled ardently to their work. During the morning she became acquainted with the faces of her daughter's neighbors as they were called in to the card-table to assist in her training. Cinch was served in the afternoons to all the friends who called to pay their respects to Mrs. Cooper. And every evening, in the place of young Cooper, who had promptly made a date for each night, a dummy was substituted.

It was during the dress-rehearsal, which occurred at one o'clock Monday afternoon, and at which, for practice, Mrs. Cooper was appointed perpetual dealer of all the hands, that she, in desperation, made a secret resolve. Her knitting-work during the week had been accomplished in her brief, unoccupied moments and in the early hours of the morning before the bell had rung calling her to the card-table; and although the sweater was finished and probably upon young William's back by this time, the baby's jacket and her son's vest had haunted her day and night, appearing before her as they did in their tempting and unfinished state.

"Yes," thought Mrs. Cooper, as she carefully dealt out four cards for the widow, beginning with herself, "I really don't believe Mary will care, and I certainly see no reason why she should, so I'll just tuck it into my bag, and have it to pick up if there seems to be a convenient opportunity. I'm sure we always consider it quite proper at the sociables back home, and this is such a dainty white."

Mrs. Cooper, therefore, when she arrived with her daughter at the door-step

of the Gordon Keats Tuckerman home at half after two, held dangling from her trembling arm, a neat, unobtrusive bag which contained her handkerchief, and also something else unknown to her daughter—a long, slender something causing sharp and suspiciously pointed punctures to appear at certain corners of the bag as it swung to and fro.

"My mother, Mrs. Cooper," said Mrs. Jamison, bowing gracefully to her hostess a few moments later.

Mrs. Gordon Keats Tuckerman extended her distinguished hand in that gracious manner which rendered her every act most impressive.

"And my mother, Mrs. Jones, who is also visiting me," she added, swaying elegantly toward a timid looking lady in black who had the appearance of trying to hide behind her celebrated daughter.

Mrs. Cooper's eyes brightened as she looked upon her, but she was swept on, with merely a brief word, into a room swarming, it seemed to her, with daintily gowned women and the dreaded card-tables.

Presently the buzz of voices quieted a little as Mrs. Gordon Keats Tuckerman was observed to be standing near the large window, speaking in that soft, well-modulated voice which was famed for its extreme gentility and refinement.

"Because we are all becoming rather fatigued with cinch," she was saying. "Therefore, I have substituted five hundred—"

Her voice trailed off into faint, subdued silence and Mrs. Jamison turned to look at her mother desperately.

It was the climax. The catastrophe that for five days had been impending in the Jamison household had occurred. The explosion of a bomb under the Jamison front porch could not have sent the blood from the cheek of that household's mistress more swiftly, more faintingly than did this gentle speech. As it was, Mrs. Jamison gasped, pressed a cold hand against a heart that had all but stopped and tried to speak. Her frail attempt was quite without results. Her lips and tongue were as dry as excelsior. She tried again, this time to more purpose. Mrs. Cooper was beaming through her gold spectacles.

"Can you?" she asked. "It's really very simple. Merely a mixture of whist and euchre."

"I cannot," said Mrs. Cooper in a determined voice, much like her daughter's. "You know I cannot, Mary."

Mrs. Jamison agreed reluctantly, but for once she was convinced.

"It would be impossible," she moaned. "It would be the last five days over again if we tried to teach you anything new. But what shall we do? Mother, Mrs. Gordon Keats Tuckerman is coming over our way."

Miss Tuckerman, a striking looking girl with a haughty air, was whispering to her mother hurriedly. "If you could only keep Mrs. Jamison's mother from playing," she was saying suggestively, "that would leave a place for you, wouldn't it? It seems a shame that you can't play this afternoon at all."

A hasty consultation with Mrs. Jamison seemed to bring about the greatest satisfaction to all concerned, and as she and Mrs. Gordon Keats Tuckerman took their places at the same table, by a common impulse they turned around together rather guiltily toward the spot where they had left their mothers in conversation. Surprise and dismay overspread both countenances, for Mrs. Cooper was knitting calmly, as was also Mrs. Jones. Moreover, they were talking together like old friends and their faces were quite wreathed in the beatific smiles of contented age.

"Mine is a little jacket for Mary's baby," Mrs. Cooper was saying. "And I've just finished a sweater that I sent to Mrs. Louisy Jenning's youngest grandson, William. I promised him that he should have it to wear to a ball-game to-day. The boys back home have a team and he's the captain of it," and the needles clicked their satisfaction.

FOR SHORTY CULLEN'S KIDS

BY WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE

BIG MUTT MIXLEY suddenly seized Shorty by the arm. His grip was as the grip of death.

"Hush, you blamed fool," he whispered, "this here is the place."

"Yeh," returned Shorty, his teeth chattering. The two sank down into a dark corner.

It was two o'clock in the morning in October. The moon was full, dotting the place with uncanny shadows. The two men were part of the night and belonged to the shadows. Big Mutt Mixley knew his business. But for the full moon and but for the shadows, he would not have been there.

He still held his grip on Shorty Cullen's arm. He pointed to the big house upon their left.

"You see that dinky little window at the back?" he whispered. Shorty gulped and nodded.

"That there window," went on Mixley, "is the key to the whole thing. That's why I wanted you. You see?"

"Sure," chattered Shorty.

"It's the only safe entrance in the whole house," proceeded Big Mutt, "and beside, under it is the silver-safe and the sideboard. Jehosaphat! Silver? They're full to the gunnel with plate in that there ranch. And when we get it; say, bo, it's us for N'Yawk an' the white lights. We wont draw a sober breath for—well months, t'say the least."

Big Mutt Mixley drew himself up and stood straight in the shadow.

"Come on," said Big Mutt Mixley.

Shorty Cullen obeyed. There was nothing else to do. Big Mutt's grip was like an iron vise, and—beside, the white lights and the big drunk they were going on—that sounded good.

"Come on," again exclaimed Big Mutt.

Like a flash the two had crossed the narrow moonlit space and stood underneath the window. Once more they had become part and parcel of the black shadows. Mutt Mixley lost no time.

"Climb on me shoulders, Shorty," he commanded.

Shorty obeyed, and Mutt passed him up a bit of iron. Shorty took it. It was the first time he had had a bit of iron like that in his hands. He shivered, but he took it.

"Wedge it in under," hissed Big Mutt, "and push her up. You see?"

Shorty Cullen, perched on the shoulders of Big Mutt, wobbled uncertainly, but did as he was told. He did it well. The small window opened almost without noise. Big Mutt hunched his shoulders against the extra weight when Shorty would leap upwards.

"Now," hissed Big Mutt, "hop in through. You know the rest. I told you all about it. Now....

"Jehosaphat, you blamed idiot, what're you tryin' to do?"

What was Shorty Cullen trying to do? For an instant he had poised himself, ready for a spring, upon the broad shoulders of Big Mutt Mixley. Then suddenly, he had come, crumpling, wailing to the ground.

"Blamed idiot!" exclaimed Big Mutt, "what made you fall?"

Shorty Cullen whimpered. "It aint that, Mutt," he shuddered, "I didn't fall. I just came down, that's all."

He felt himself grow ice cold as he spoke.

"It aint that," he went on; "it's this. I can't do it, Mutt. I can't—I can't—I can't."

"What?"

"I can't, I tell you. I aint done nothin' like it, never, I aint. I always kept within the law. I can't, I tell you."

"You told me you would," sneered Big Mutt. "You said you would and welcome. I went all over the ground with you, and it was all understood, account o' your share, an' the white lights, an' the drunk. You said you would, blast you."

"I know," wailed Shorty Cullen, "I know. It's my fault. But I can't do it. It aint myself I'm thinkin' of. If...."

Something clicked in his throat and he had to work his tongue to moisten it.

"If anything happened, say, Mutt, if it did,....say, what would become of the kids? It aint myself. It's the kids. What'd become o' the kids? You see?"

"The kids?" hissed Mutt.

"I'm goin', Mutt," announced Shorty decisively. "I've made up my mind, and I'm goin'. Understand?"

For answer Big Mutt caught him once more by the arm, and with him once more slid across the narrow moonlit space into the blackness.

"You're not goin'," returned Mixley, "not till I finish this here job. An' I'll finish it. I wouldn't trust you, now. An' the drunk'll be mine, not yours. I aint goin' to risk trustin' you to get out o' these here grounds without bein' seen. You wait here an' don't move," he added savagely, "until I'm through."

"I'll wait," meekly responded Shorty Cullen, rubbing his hand across his stubby mustache, "I'll do anything but.... that."

Big Mutt Mixley tried for a big window, cut the pane, cut a wire or two, shoved another bit of iron and jammed it in, and suddenly, and noiselessly, the big window opened. And Big Mutt crawled through.

"Just as safe as the small one," said Big Mutt. "I was a jay for bringin' him along."

Three minutes later he straightened up in the big dark room, the perspiration starting from his forehead.

"What's that?" he groaned to himself.

It was something, a voice, a whisper. "Mutt....Mutt....Mutt...." it said, "cheese it. The cops....cheese it.... Mutt."

Cautiously he glanced out of the window. There, under it, was Shorty Cullen, quivering. That was not all. Far to the right, out upon the lawn, Big Mutt's practiced vision detected two shadows—moving shadows—stealing toward the house.

"One of 'em's Mulvaney, of the plain-clothes squad, or I'll eat a horse," Big Mutt told himself. Mulvaney....he knew what Mulvaney meant. But big Mutt Mixley was not there to be caught. He had been caught before, and knew what it meant. No more of that for him. He had legs....

With a bound he cleared the window-sill, cleared Shorty Cullen, and dashed and darted, always a shadow among shadows, into safety.

Shorty Cullen followed him.

When Shorty Cullen was arraigned next day he was confronted with a short bit of iron that he had dropped in his wake, the same that he had used to force the little window; and he was confronted with evidence that to his mind led but to one end.

"What'il become o' the kids?" he wailed and whimpered to himself.

He was followed to his cell by Mulvaney of the plain-clothes squad.

"Shorty," said Mulvaney, toying with the jimmy as he spoke, "there's a whole lot to this case. We saw the other chap,

you know. It's no use o' your keepin' your mouth shut. You couldn't turn a job like this in ten years. It was a pro. affair, and we know it. This aint your jimmy, you know. Come, who was the real thing, you blamed idiot? Was it Mutt Mixley. . . . Was it? Say, if I could only get the goods on him. Say, it was Mutt Mixley, wasn't it, Shorty Cullen?"

Shorty brushed his eyes with his coat-sleeve.

"I'll be sent up as sure as guns," he whimpered. "What's goin' to become o' those there kids?"

Big Mutt Mixley made for the white lights, and passed them. It was the East Side for his. And there was no drunk in it, either. A drunk wasn't safe.

"Not with Mulvaney bringing up the rear," he groaned aloud. "An' Mulvaney'll never stop. Shorty Cullen'll peach as sure as guns, an' Mulvaney'll own N'Yawk until he gets me. 'N if it hadn't been for Shorty Cullen I could have had that job done an' over with, an' made a clean getaway. An' that dinky little window wasn't no better than the rest. It's Big Mutt Mixley for the rat holes now."

Money was the thing that staggered him. He needed money. He got along well enough, starving himself and sleeping on the lumber piles as long as the mild weather lasted, but when November nipped him, he began to groan in earnest. He looked at himself one day in the mirror of a barroom. He was gaunt and hungry-looking as a wolf.

"I've got to have money," he complained.

And yet, night and day, in his dreams and in his waking hours, he would start up, and look about him—and see Mulvaney of the plain-clothes squad there at his side. The vision always faded once he looked it in the face, but he well knew the time would come when it would never fade.

"Blast that Shorty Cullen," he would groan again. And—money, he must have—money. He didn't want his fun; he didn't want wine or women or song. All he craved was a bed to sleep on, and just enough to keep that gnawing feeling from his stomach. There was no one to whom he could go for money. He had no cronies. Until this disastrous affair he had done his jobs alone. And now he had to face this alone.

"Money!" At last his face lighted with hope.

"I'll go home," he said at last. "Mulvaney'll never expect an old hand like me to come back. I'll go home, make a flying trip—and screw a hundred out o' Hanaford, that blamed old guy out home. See if I don't."

He laughed aloud as he thought of it. It was a nervy thing to do, but he was the man to do it. Only at night he would wake up with terror dripping from his face, dreaming of Mulvaney.

"I got to do it," he announced finally to himself. He begged three cents on the street and walked over to a West Side ferry-house and took the ferry-boat across. The rest of the way he could walk, eight long miles though it were.

It was late in December and cold—bitter cold. His feet were sore. He was weak and hungry. But the ecstasy of screwing a hundred out of old Hanaford by means of blackmail, and of eluding Mulvaney of the plain-clothes—the glory of the after-feast and after-sleep, sustained and soothed him.

"I'll drop in there at night," he told himself.

He timed himself with exactitude, and reached his home-town at somewhat after seven. For the first time he noticed the crowds. In New York he had ignored them. But now, in his own town, all the world seemed to have gone mad.

"What in thunder's goin' on," he asked himself.

Christmas! That was it. Christmas-eve. It was a good thing. He could lose himself in crowds. And he was so blamed thin that Mulvaney and Mulvaney's men probably wouldn't know him if they saw him.

"Gee, though," he complained, "there's cops enough, too."

He was right. The cops were out in droves to keep the crowds straight. And Mixley soon discovered that nearly the whole force was upon the main thoroughfares. The dark side-streets were almost unprotected.

"DO YOU SEE THAT DINKEY LITTLE WINDOW?

"Thank God for Christmas," breathed Big Mutt Mixley as he darted down a side-street to get to Hanaford's, the biggest fence in town. The rest was easy. He knew it. Hope surged within him. He wouldn't have to cross town again. He would skin around it. And he certainly would put the screws on Hanaford —wouldn't he? There wasn't a cop or a plain-clothes man in sight, and—

What was that? Who was that?

He had looked behind him, and there, well behind, well in the shadow, was a man—trailing him as sure as guns.

The man behind came slowly under the light of a street lamp.

It was Mulvaney. Big Mutt Mixley's heart sank. He looked about him. He was in the factory-district now. Nothing on either side of the street save high walls and padlocked gates. He was lost —lost—

But on ahead he saw a faint gleam of light. That meant something, sure; some break in the dull monotony of painted fences. He hastened on, looked back but once, turned a corner like a flash, and vaulted over a low iron railing. His feet touched grass—grass dried by winter, but still grass—just a little patch of it.

"Now what shall I do?"

That was the question. He was still visible from the street. At any moment Mulvaney might round the corner, and the jig would be up. He looked up at the building enclosed inside the railing.

"A church, by jinks," he told himself.

He was right, or partly right at any rate. He was within the confines of the Mission Chapel of St. James Church.

"If the blamed place wasn't lighted up," he groaned.

But it was lighted up, and there was music and the sound of voices from within. It was lighted up, except....

"Wait a minute," whispered Big Mutt Mixley to himself.

There was a little room or alcove that wasn't lighted up. It was just faintly illuminated. There was a door leading into it. He tried the door. It was locked. There was a window. He sprang for the window. That was locked, but—Big

Mutt felt in his coat-pocket and produced a bit of iron. In another instant he was inside the room. He shut down the window.

He was alone. He was safe. But—was he safe?

He didn't know. He crouched in a corner for an instant. A dim but sputtering gaslight was burning in the middle of the room. In the far corner something rested on a chair, something red and white. His curiosity got the better of him. He approached it gingerly, and quite as gingerly took it in his hands. Then he laughed with silent glee.

"Jehosaphat!" he exclaimed softly to himself.

It was Santa Claus' costume. In the big room outside he could hear the sound of children's voices.

"It's a go," he told himself.

He was no dreamer, was Big Mutt. He was a man of action. In another instant he had transformed himself from Big Mutt Mixley to Kriss Kringle. He had just finished fitting on the beard, when, once more, the perspiration started from his forehead.

"What's that?"

It was a knock at the door, clear, insistent. And then another. He lowered the light and looked cautiously out of the window. Half-way up the steps there stood a man, silent, immovable.

It was not Mulvaney. Mutt leaped to the door, and unlocked it, and a stylishly dressed young man came in.

"Thank heaven," said the young man, with a sigh of relief, "you're going to play Santa Claus to-night. I told 'em I'd do it if they couldn't get anybody else. It's all right. I've got to go shopping with my wife, and," he stretched forth his hand, "I'm glad they got somebody else," he said.

And then he left.

And Big Mutt Mixley drew a long breath, and turned, and walked straight into the big room within, from whence had come the sound of children's voices.

"There's Santa Claus!"

A shout that almost rent the heavens greeted him. A young woman approached him.

"You did get here, Mr. Challoner," she ventured. Then she stopped. "It isn't Mr. Challoner," she went on.

Big Mutt Mixley shook his head. "He sent me in his place," he answered.

He laughed aloud and waved his hands. He was recklessly happy. He was safe. He knew he was safe. Fate had played right into his hands.

"Now that Santa Claus is here," the young lady announced in shrill tones to the crowd of ragamuffins that filled the chapel, "we'll sing our Christmas-carol to him."

They sang. They did it so badly the first time she made them sing the first verse over. And Big Mutt Mixley joined in. He couldn't help himself. The Christmas-spirit was upon him.

It sounded good. It warmed him up. Mulvaney was out of this, all right, all right.

"These dolls and things," the young lady told him in a whisper, "I suppose Mr. Challoner has told you, are for the girls; that pile is for the boys. And the boxes of candy are for both. A toy or a doll, and a box of candy for each one. You want to keep your wits about you, though. There'll be a scramble."

Big Mutt Mixley straightened up and looked the youngsters in the eye.

"Now," he yelled.

There was a rush, and he was at once the center of a howling mob. But he was impartial.

"Gee!" his beneficiaries howled, "we can't get away with this here Santa Claus. Wow!"

For this Santa Claus had frustrated a young smuggler with the flat of his hand.

"Now you get back—get back," cried Mutt to the crowd. "Let me look at you. Have you all been served."

No they hadn't. Far to the right was a diminutive pair, shouldered out by the crowd, standing on the edge, watching with wistful eyes. They were mites, short, frail little codgers, a boy and a girl, and their clothes were ragged. Big Mutt Mixley beckoned to them, and cleared a path for them.

"Come up here, kids," he said.

Hand in hand they came, the ragged

boy and girl; hand in hand they confronted Big Mutt Mixley. And Big Mutt Mixley drew a deep breath.

"They're Shorty Cullen's kids," he told himself.

And once more he saw Shorty Cullen, on his knees back there that time, saying he couldn't, couldn't; that he hadn't never broke the law; that he couldn't—fer the kids. And here were the kids. He wondered vaguely if they would know him. And he wondered vaguely, in case they did, whether they would give him away.

"Hello, kids!" he said, in such a raucous voice that the young woman next him started, "here's for yours—and yours."

The ragged little mite of a girl got two dolls and as many boxes of candy. And Shorty Cullen, Jr., fared as well from the pile on the boys' side of the tree. And for the first time they smiled faintly.

"Hello, Santa Claus!" they said.

They grew bold and clutched him by the baggy red costume. Their lips quivered.

"Why aint you comin' to our house this year?" they queried.

Coming to their house! Were the kids crazy? With their old man ready to give him up? Then he saw that they had addressed him in his new capacity.

"Why," he stammered, "I am, for sure."

They shook their heads. "It's pop that says you aint."

He glanced at the kids keenly.

"Where is your pop?" he queried.

They drew close to him, and pulled him down to their level and whispered.

"He's chailed," they answered him, in awe.

"He's waitin' trial," the boy volunteered as one who had technical information on the subject.

"He said," the girl assured Mutt, clinging tightly to her Christmas-burden of dolls and candy, "that they're goin' to send him up. He says that you'll never, never come, not to our place, till he gets out. Why wont you. You always come before."

"Blame idiot," growled Mutt to himself, "he ought to go up. Not sat'sfied with ballin' a thing all up, he peaches on me. And Mulvaney lookin' for me every block. He ought to go up."

He shivered. Once more the fear was on him. Once more the drops started from his forehead. Inside of ten minutes now he would be once more out upon the street with Mulvaney waiting for him, just as like as not.

The young woman turned to him and shook him by the hand.

"You've made a splendid Santa Claus," she laughed. She leaned over and whispered to him. "You're a heap sight better than even Mr. Challoner."

He laughed with her, and turned back to the little room. The Cullen kids were following him.

"You've been awful good to us," they said, "but, why aint you comin' any more over to our place."

He laughed. For a good idea had struck him.

"Why, I'll come now," he said, holding out a hand to each.

He would show Mulvaney a trick or two. If there was anything allowable on a Christmas-eve, it certainly was a full grown Santa Claus walking through the streets with a kid on either hand. It was all to the good. Nobody could know him; nobody would tackle him.

"Come on, kids," he whispered.

He unlocked the door, turned out the gas, and with the Cullen kids, sped swiftly over the dried grass, lifted them over the little railing, leaped over it himself, and turned the corner.

"Where are we goin'?" they asked him.

"You come with me," he told them.

It took them ten minutes to reach Hanaford's. He hadn't forgotten Hanaford. He had to have that hundred. He found Hanaford. Hanaford shook his head.

"Now for the screws," thought Big Mutt.

So he pulled Hanaford into a corner, and talked to him in a low tone. The kids sat on a counter and swung their legs and ate candy in satisfied silence.

"Blame it," said Mutt to Hanaford, and even Hanaford could understand

HE PULLED HANAFORD INTO A CORNER AND TALKED IN A LOW TONE"

that he was desperate, "if I don't get that hundred I'll show you up. I know things that you think I don't. There's the Berry deal, and the Mulford, and the Fordyce, and—the Allen. . . ."

Hanaford shivered. "Do *you* know about the Allen case?" he queried.

Big Mutt Mixley sniffed the air. "I'm waitin' for that hundred, Hanaford," he announced.

Hanaford forked it over. Big Mutt stowed it away. Big Mutt shook his head.

"I took big risks to get this—what with Mulvaney watching out, and Shorty Cullen up there in jail, naming me in his prayers."

"What?" gasped Hanaford, "was you mixed up in that there?"

Mixley nodded. He was bold enough with Hanaford. Hanaford didn't dare to peach on anybody.

"Sure I was," said Mixley. "Aint all the town got it."

"Got nothin'," answered Hanaford.

He drew forth a big scrap-book and leafed it over.

"There's the whole thing. And there. And there."

Big Mutt Mixley's eyes bulged out. He read, read, read. Then he drew a long breath.

"The blamed idiot," he almost yelled. "He could 'a' got free by just saying the word, I'll bet—the blamed big fool. Gee but he's soft, he is."

He turned suddenly. "Come on, kids," he said.

He readjusted his beard and wig and stalked forth.

"The blamed idiot," he muttered.

As they went, he stopped the kids and put his face close to them.

"Which would you rather have, kids," he suddenly exclaimed, "for Christmas; me, or your old man?"

"Both," they answered in unison.

"You can't have both," he answered.

They thought for a moment, weighing their desires. Then they turned to him.

"Our old man," they answered softly.

"Because," they gleefully explained, "if we can have him, we can have you, too. He told us that himself."

He hustled them into the side-door of a dingy café.

"Telephone?" he queried.

The bartender, nodding hastily, pointed to the booth.

"There, Cap," he exclaimed. He had mistaken Mutt for a Salvation Army man—the kind with the kettles on the corners.

"637 Mott," breathed Mutt into the 'phone.

He knew the number well. He knew the gruff voice at the other end, too.

"Hello, sergeant," he said in a low voice, "this is Melville, of Cowen & Black. You know. Lawyers, Lawyers Building."

"Oh, hello, Melville," said the sergeant pleasantly, "didn't recognize your voice."

"Say, sarge," went on Mutt, "we represent Shorty Cullen."

"No," gasped the sergeant, "thought that was Stringer's case."

"We've been substituted," explained Mutt. "And say," this in a lower and more confidential tone, "Shorty is getting softer and softer every moment. It's Christmas and he's got two kids, and—No, wait a minute, you don't understand. What if we can show up Big Mutt Mixley on that job?"

"What?" yelled the sergeant. "If you can do that. . . ."

"And about Shorty. . . ."

The sergeant laughed. "There's nothing that would please Mulvaney better," he returned, "than to turn Shorty loose, and to take Mutt in. You ought to know that yourself. But, say, is it straight goods? Say, if you only could—"

Big Mutt Mixley rang off.

"Blamed idiot," he kept saying to himself. "He never peached. He could have got out, if—"

"Where're we goin'?" asked the kids.

Big Mutt never answered them. He swept them on and on. And far down, around the corner of a street, he saw a big green light—a light that seemed to taint the atmosphere; that wiped out the good fellowship of Christmas-eve.

"Wait a minute, kids," said Big Mutt, huskily. He drew his hand across his eyes. "Five years," he said, "it's a long time all right, all right."

He kneeled down on the walk, and

drew forth the two fifty dollar bills that Hanaford had given him. He pinned one on the inside of the boy's rags, and the other on the mite of a girl.

"Come on, kids," he commanded.

A moment later they swung in under the green light. They stopped before the sergeant at his desk. The sergeant waved his hand.

"Sorry, captain," he said to Mutt, making the bartender's mistake, "I'm cleaned out for Christmas. That's a fact." He smiled. "There," he said, pointing to a man in the corner, "is the only man with money."

Big Mutt Mixley turned. The man in the corner was Mulvaney of the plain-clothes squad.

Big Mutt Mixley tore off his beard and wig.

"It's Big Mutt," yelled Mulvaney, leaping in order to cut off the escape.

Big Mutt laughed.

"You couldn't've caught me if you'd tried," he boasted.

He looked down at the kids.

"I was brought in by these."

"Who's kids?"

"They're Shorty Cullen's," returned Mixley.

He sank down upon a bench. The weakness and the hunger and the hopelessness and desperation had come back upon him. But the terror was all gone.

"The Satterthwaite affair was up to me," he said slowly, "and you've got to let that fellow Shorty Cullen go. Blamed idiot, he might've peached on me long ago. Blamed fool. He's as innocent as the new born babe. You've got the goods on me—for fair."

Big Mutt laughed, and disrobed.

"Send the kids home, sarge," he said, "and send these here back to the Mission Chapel, where I got 'em."

He tossed the duds upon the desk.

"And as for me, gee whiz," he exclaimed, "I hope they've got a good Christmas-dinner for to-morrow at the jail, for I aint had a square meal in the last six months.

He glanced appealingly at Mulvaney.

"You wont forget," he pleaded, "to send Shorty Cullen back to his kids, Mulvaney?" The plain-clothes man nodded.

And Big Mutt Mixley stretched his arms and walked back to a cell. He hummed a Christmas-carol as he went. For the Christmas-spirit had smitten Big Mutt Mixley hip and thigh.

Reclamation

BY ALMA MARTIN ESTABROOK

Author of "The Encounter," etc.

SHE sat in the indulgent light of a big jovial lamp, sewing delicate stitches in a bit of fine napery—a woman like an orchard-bough at time of flowering, fluffy and pink-and-white and fragrant, the dimpling of her chin over her collar speaking eloquently of her content with life.

"Tired?" she queried absently of the man who let himself in with a latch-key and came to sit on the opposite side of the hearth.

He was a thin, middle-aged fellow, too early out-worn, while she had grown sleek and plump on affection. Serenity was the accustomed thing with her, as usual as her excellent bodily health. She rested in the security of his love as a thing which had been from the beginning and would be to the end.

As they sat together, she silent over her work, he buried in his paper, the telephone rang. With a glance at her, he sank wearily in his chair; she arose at once to answer it.

When she returned her usual placidity was considerably stirred.

"They want you at Carolans," she said. "I'm afraid things have reached their climax there."

His look was a startled question.

"It has been a sharp warfare between

them," she reflected, taking up her work again, "and it must be almost over. Marian's mother told me the other day that the family consider a separation inevitable, and that the sooner it comes the better it will be for Marian, as she is breaking under the strain. I told them you'd come right over."

The doctor settled in his chair.

"I'm dead spent to-night," he said; "I'm afraid you'll have to tell them so."

"What! You wont go?"

"No. I've had an unusually trying day and my own nerves are much too uncertain for me to think of trying to quiet Mrs. Carolan's. That's what's the matter, I suppose? They'll have to call Woodberry."

She sat, needle poised, for an instant, looking at him, then without further words went to deliver his message.

"Come away with me somewhere," he said to her after a half hour of further silence. "We haven't had an outing together in years, and heaven knows we both need it."

She was finishing a lion-rampant and she put in the stitch she had begun before she replied.

"In May! Don't you know that's my busiest month of the whole year? I'll go later, but I can't think of it now."

"I'm sorry." His voice was tired, but another ear than Diana Lydston's would have caught the note of apathy beneath the weariness. "I hoped you'd come along."

"Then you are going?" she exclaimed.

He threw away his cigar and stared after it into the fireplace where the winter fire was dead. His face was a network of tangled lines. His nervous hands were not quite steady even when they rested on the arms of the chair, and he looked ill.

"Yes, I'm going," he answered quietly.

"I'm sorry you feel so worn," she said unanxiously—the summer always found him fagged, but the rest of his vacation always revived him. "You really ought not to work so hard. Where do you think you will go?"

"Anywhere other people are not," he replied irritably.

She folded her work—it was ten o'clock—and stood for a minute looking down on him with the same sort of smile with which she would have regarded her neighbor's small son if he had come to her in a passion against his little world.

The doctor was not an entirely amiable man, although his patients regarded him as a demi-god, subscribing to him almost superhuman virtues and attributes. He was always overworked, always suffering with dyspepsia, and he carried about with him a sense of universal suffering which tore at his heart like an embedded thorn.

His wife bent over him, and, after the tactless manner of some women, kissed the thinning spot on the crown of his head.

"Poor fellow!" she murmured lightly. "How they do overwork you!"

Then she took a chocolate from the bon-bon dish on the table and went upstairs nibbling it and lifting her soft flounces out of the way of her daintily clad, fat little feet.

As she brushed her hair a little later the ringing of the door-bell made her furrow her brows impatiently—these night-calls were very tiresome things, but John would hardly go out again no matter who wanted him, after refusing such old friends as the Carolans.

The next instant the lift of an excited voice took her to the head of the stairs.

Mrs. Carolan and her mother were below. Marian stood in the middle of the room, her hands flung out to the doctor, her tremulous, half-hysterical tones flowing at once into a recital of her woes.

To Diana, on the stairs, her voice came strangely. It was no longer full of cadence, considering as it went, weaving pleasantry with epigram and sparkling with laughter. It flung itself out stiff and stripped. There was some humility in it, but more rebellion. And having broken the dam of restraint it poured forth in a pitiless flood that chilled Diana's heart.

She recalled Mrs. Carolan's continuous concealments, her courage in the face of her husband's neglect, her brave attempt to keep a smiling guard lifted against the curious glances of the world. She had fought well for her happiness,

DRAWN BY JAMES S. WEILAND

She went up-stairs lifting the soft flounces

and losing hope of that had fought on for her pride's sake. Now neither hope nor concealment was any longer possible, and she came, scourged with self-questioning, worn with effort, sick of body and soul, to beg help of the doctor who had helped her over other trying crises of her life.

Diana Lydston felt a surge of thankfulness at her own fortunate lot. She was conscious also of a complacent pride in her husband's efficiency to aid. It was odd, she told herself, how people came to him with sick-hearts as well as sick-bodies and how he helped them both.

But this was very hard for John. Doubly hard because of their long friendship for both of the Carolans. Her eyes sought him half-pityingly, half-curiously.

Revelation may flash from a smile, or tremble in a glance or quiver in the set of unrelenting lips; it may ring triumphant in exclamation or thrill in an undertone. There are eyes that never see it, and ears that never catch it. But when it looked forth now, for the briefest instant, in John Lydston's pale face, his wife saw it, and fell away from it as if it had been a hand lifted in sudden violence against her.

Of slow and sometimes almost dull perception she now perceived with instant clarity. But the confronting brought with it immediate bewilderment, stupenduous and overwhelming, and she crept up the stairs and into her room, batting heavy brain-eyes.

John to care for another woman! John!

Over and over she said it, lifelessly, automatically, as we repeat to ourselves in crises some phrase the mind has picked up and swings around and around as the wheel the bit of paper from the roadway.

That he had not admitted it to himself, she knew, but what admission ever made the fact, she asked herself. He cared. He cared so greatly that he was afraid to trust himself to see her suffer, to help her through the supreme trial of her life. This was why he had not answered her summons to-night. Why he was going away.

John! Her John!

Nothing had ever so astounded her in her life. That he could—that he would—that he did! Her soul gasped in its disconcertment. Aggrievance swept her like a fire and left her seared and sickened.

She went through the night as other women have gone through such nights, and she wakened from her late morning sleep with a resolution. She would reclaim what was her's; she would retake what she had lost.

"I've changed my mind about going with you," she said to him at luncheon. "I'm coming along. I can be ready whenever you want to start."

With some women "retaking" would have been merely a question of a *masseuse* and a new dressmaker; but she was perfectly aware that her physical attractions had not waned. She was neither faded nor dowdy. But in her ceaseless search for the reason of her failure to keep her husband's love in all its freshness and strength, she discovered that she had lived but dully. She was, she told herself with curious humility and bitterness, a mere sun-sodden thing, blinking in the warmth of possessions she did not begin to value.

Mind and heart had grown like stagnant twin pools, unsweetened by hidden springs. While Marian Carolan mirrored sky and sun, leaf and flower, flash of wing and fleck of shadow. Was it any wonder that John had stopped to catch the reflection of such clarity?

And before she could hope for any change in him she must herself be changed, she realized. She knew, too, that a woman is very slowly transformed. So she prolonged their outing to its utmost time limit.

The constant sense of purpose became her. It was the stimulant she had needed. The blood pounded in her pulses, and heretofore she had not known what pulses were. Her brain throbbed and impulse after impulse awakened. But the steadying hand of common-sense kept her from making any mistakes. In regaining what she had lost, in retaking her citadel there must be no flaring banners, no false note of challenge.

As the days went by she sometimes caught her husband's arrested glance and knew he realized a change in her which he could not define. She rejoiced that their comradeship grew closer, and the tenderness between them deeper; and growing more and more skilled she relieved the dullness of their life's monochrome by added light and shadow.

They were at an inn up on one of the Canadian islands at the beginning of the fishing-season. As she dressed one morning to go out with her husband, a steamer doddered up to the port and dropped anchor, and the few arrivals began to straggle up the board-walk that led to the hostelry doors.

As she put the last touch to her toilet she glanced carelessly out of the window, then dropped away from it with a cry in which many emotions rang.

Marian Carolan and her mother were coming up the walk! And Marian was no longer tied to her husband, but free!

Her first impulse was to surrender in the fight which seemed against her, with Fate so plainly on the other side. But she had really gallant blood in her, and she loved John Lydston as she had not loved him before. So she fought on so cleverly she astonished herself.

"You are changed, Diana," he said to her tentatively, one morning when Mrs. Carolan had been there a fortnight. His eyes were puzzled.

"It's because I'm so disgracefully lazy," she smiled. "I must have gained pounds."

But they both knew that avoirdupois had nothing to do with it.

Toward the end of the week they went away up the river to camp, she and John, taking Marian Carolan with them. Her effort had not been to keep them apart,

DRAWN BY JAMES S. WEILAND

She lay there staring up through the trees

but rather to bring them together. She meant that victory, if it came at all, should be complete. His test must be final, leaving no agony of doubt in her mind.

To this end she left them often, taking long tramps through the forest with the old guide Beaupré, or paddling out in her canoe and staying for hours in some quiet cove.

To have seen them together one must have thought the *camaraderie* between the three quite perfect. Yet, returning one day earlier than they had expected, she in her husband's caribou boots and an old army shirt and hat of her brother's, to find Mrs. Carolan, looking very crisp and sweet and dainty, reading poetry to John, she thought she caught a look of comprehension in old Beaupré's eyes.

"Perhaps *madame* will not care to go out again to-morrow to tramp," he suggested. "To-day has been difficult."

"To-morrow more than ever," she declared lightly, a sense of *finale* making her reckless.

"I want Beaupré myself," said Lydston, hearing the conversation.

"That is good, *m'sieu'*," said the old man. "The fish bite well."

At daylight the next morning the paddle of Beaupré's canoe cut a shining path up the river and the little bark shot out of sight between green coverts.

They stood it very well together, the two women, until noon; but just after luncheon Mrs. Carolan put on her hat and patting back a yawn said she thought she would go up the river to the Becker's camp, if Diana did not mind.

Diana, lying on her couch of pine boughs covered with a steamer rug, watched her go, a bitter little smile about her eyes.

For an hour she lay there staring up through the trees, sometimes putting out a hand to gather spruce needles and crushing them in her palm to sniff them absently. But for the most part she lay very still, a line between her eyes drawing so taut it changed her face strangely.

At last, with an exclamation of determination she slipped off the pine bed and hurried down to the beach and the one boat left there.

At seven that evening the doctor and Beaupré came down the river. They were later than they expected to be by an hour. The forest was still and dark. It had stormed in the afternoon and a wet woodsey smell was over everything. The doctor was in his best mood. The fish baskets bulged. He liked the sport; the end of the day. And he was honestly hungry.

When they came in sight of camp and no light streamed out to welcome them he started in surprise, demanding of Beaupré what it could mean.

"That *madame* and her guest have not wakened from their afternoon-nap, perhaps," said Beaupré; but his weather-worn face looked somewhat anxious.

Lydston sprang out the instant the canoe touched shore and hurried toward the camp.

"Diana!" he called, and again: "Diana!"

The forest gave him echo for answer.

"Beaupré," he shouted, "they are gone! The camp is empty."

The old man came hurrying.

"They may have walked out, *m'sieu'*," he suggested.

The doctor shook his head. "Not when they expected us at any minute. And see—the cushions and books are wet. They must have gone before the storm."

"Wait, *m'sieu'*."

But Lydston did not wait. Lighting a lantern he swung quickly down to the beach.

"Are the boats there?" he called.

"Neither of them," said Beaupré.

His face was white and working.

"Then they did not go together!"

"No, *m'sieu'*," Beaupré faltered. "And *m'sieu'*, one boat is bad. She is very bad indeed. Last night she sprang a leak with me. I meant to have warned you not to take her out, but in the hurry of the morning I forgot it, God forgive me."

"How long would it be in filling?"

"Not long."

"But it would float."

Beaupré's face was pale. "You forget the rapids are down the river, *m'sieu'*."

John Lydston groaned.

"If my wife took the bad boat—Mrs. Carolan would probably go up stream to the Becker's camp. But Mrs. Lydston has no fear of the rapids and she likes the river down that way best. If we knew—"

"What is this?" exclaimed the old guide stopping to lift something that lay in the sand where the leaky boat had been moored. He turned it over once, then handed it in silence to the doctor.

It was Mrs. Lydston's gauntlet glove.

Her husband's fingers closed spasmodically over it. The lantern wavered in his other hand, but when he spoke his voice was steady. It fell upon Beaupré's ears with an almost professional calm.

"Take the canoe and the lantern and go down-stream," he said. "Keep to the other shore. I'll get a light and skirt this side. Don't get so far away but we may hail each other."

"Yes, *m'sieu'*."

The paddles cut the water an instant later and the canoe, the lantern in the stern, made diagonally for the other shore.

John Lydston, spruce-torch above his head, plunged through the hip-high bracken and the clutching undergrowth. Sometimes he called his wife's name, sometimes searched silently, splashing into the water at the coves where a boat might have caught, threshing about in the lapping underbrush, leaping fallen trees that lay across the bank, their tops swept by the river.

And all the while Beaupré's light bobbed along ahead, darting like some luminous bird with the swift swing and sweep of the canoe. Save for the noise they made, the old man with his paddles and the doctor with his splashing, the forest was still.

The river slid through it breathlessly as if to get away as quickly as possible from its silence and the black deep of its shadows. But farther on the rocks of the rapid caught it and it broke into violent protest, dragging itself noisily over, so that the lifted voice of Beaupré seemed only a whisper.

The fault was not all the river's, however, Beaupré's body was shaking as badly as his voice.

"*M'sieu'*," he called, "the boat is here—capsized."

Scarcely more than a dozen rods farther on John Lydston found his wife. As the torch swung and fell in his hand at Beaupré's call, its light touched her where she lay in the bracken.

"I've been shouting myself hoarse," she said whimsically. "Did you ever hear such a fussy river?"

He went down beside her in the brack-

DRAWN BY JAMES S. WEILAND

At daylight the canoe shot up the river

en. He lifted her into his arms. Like rain his questions beat upon her. For the roaring of the rapids she could not hear what he said, but she did not need to hear. The torch had gone out as it fell and she could not see his face, but neither did she need to do that. She felt! She knew!

To him it was as if he gathered her back from death. To her it was as if he caught her back from something infinitely worse.

"Found, Beaupré! Found!"

And old Beaupré's cry came back tremulously: "Thank God! Oh, thank God, *m'sieu'!*"

Then the light came swimming toward them.

"Lean down to me, John," she said. "I—I knew the boat leaked. That was why—oh, never mind now why I took it! It was to—to get something, and," clinging closer to him, "I've got it. I'll tell you about it after a while. But when I reached midstream and the thing began to fill I came to my senses and put in safely, and you'd never have known, but I tripped and hurt my foot. If I hadn't been such a baby I suppose I might have hobbled home on it, for I knew Marian wouldn't be back from Becker's for hours. But it hurt. I hope to goodness it isn't sprained. A sprained ankle is such a nuisance."

"You lay here through the storm!" he cried.

"Oh, I kept pretty dry. Don't worry about that."

She leaned away from him patting her hair. She smiled divinely. Through the dark he saw the shining of her eyes.

"Diana, Diana, if I had lost you!" he breathed.

With a swift movement she leaned to him, pressing her lips to his. Then she pushed him away, the old *staccato* patter of her laughter ringing out with a new and indescribable note in it.

"Mercy, but you do smell fishy!" she exclaimed.

The canoe pushed its slender nose into the bank.

"Where, *m'sieu'?*" called Beaupré.

"Coming, Beaupré," John Lydston shouted.

And lifting his wife he carried her carefully down to the boat.

A Deal in Coppers

BY KILBOURNE COWLES

Author of "The Truth About Adelaide," etc.

THERE, vixen," I said breathlessly as Pamela and I paused at the foot of the hill by the lake, "what did you mean by bringing me down that steep incline at that break-neck speed? I've scattered half my painting kit along the way and it's a plumb wonder we haven't both sprained our ankles."

"People never injure themselves joyously running down a hill on a glorious June morning like this," answered Pamela with her very wisest air. "As for your painting things, I'll go and gather them together while you select your sketching site."

"Why, haven't you got settled yet?" asked Pamela when she returned a few minutes later. "You are just where I left you."

"I know it," I replied apologetically. "I was spellbound by the lovely vision of my wife winding her way up that woody road in a pink gingham gown. I was overcome with a sudden gush of thankfulness that she looks better in simple garb of cotton than do most women in silken attire."

"I shall have to wear gingham all my days if you continue to dawdle so," Pamela laughed. "And you didn't drop anything but this old paint-rag. I looked and this is all I found." She held up a bit of bedaubed linen reproachfully. "You let me climb the hill just for that."

"But it's such a pleasure to have a wife to wait on me."

"A pleasure, I should think after five years, might have lost its novelty."

"Oh, it's still quite a novelty to have her wait upon me," I rejoined, and Pam-

ela merely screwed up her pretty features into a grimace.

"Now, sir, let's to work. You know you have a lot to do, Jack."

"Yes, that's so, Pam. I have my series of sketches to make and you have a series of novels to read. We should waste no time."

My wife glanced somewhat guiltily at the volume in her hand.

"Well, I have to have some occupation. You make so much fun of my perspective that my sketching ardor is dampened, and you know, Jack, when you become absorbed in painting, you are no conversationalist at all."

Twenty minutes later, when I had begun to lay on my colors with enthusiastic rapidity, inspired by the beauty of the scene before me, Pamela closed her book with a decisive bang.

"It's dull," she remarked.

"Sorry," was my laconic response.

"Live stories interest me more than written ones."

This statement seemed to require no reply. I was trying to get a rather unusual cloud effect.

"I think we have landed into the midst of a story up at the farm," went on Pamela, apparently undiscouraged by my silence.

"I hadn't noticed anything very romantic about our worthy host and hostess," I murmured, knowing I might as well answer first as last.

The sky was a rare brilliant blue and the clouds shaded from the depths of darkest purple to the fleeciest of white—tones hard to imitate with the brush.

"Haven't you noticed Mrs. Hodges' eyes?"

"Yes, they are gray and tired looking."

"No, gray and sorrowful. She is enduring some trial. I know it. I have heard her sigh."

"Don't you think living with Hodges for thirty years or more would make any woman sigh?" I asked, leaning back to survey my work which was rather good. "He reminds me of what I once heard said of another cross-grained old man, that he would have made an uncommonly good sour apple, if he had happened to have been born into that station of life."

Pamela laughed appreciatively. "That describes him beautifully. I believe, though, that's he's sweet and sound at the core."

"Perhaps so, but he's certainly tart on the outside."

"Somehow," mused Pamela, "I have a feeling that our coming here to this out of the way place was providential, for I believe we shall be able to help that unhappy woman in some way."

"Well, if you must have an object for your sympathy, Pam, I think Mrs. Hodges is an easier proposition than the crippled boy you discovered in the south last winter, or the old maid schoolteacher you chaperoned at the mountains last summer."

"You may scoff all you wish, but we got that poor little chap into an industrial home, didn't we, where he is learning a useful trade?"

"Yes, and we married off the schoolteacher to an unsuspecting old bachelor who hadn't the least intention or desire to marry until he got into your—our toils. What he had ever done, Pam, that you should have—"

"Jack, that man was just pining for a wife, but he didn't know it until he saw Miss Belinda. Now all I did was to make her fluff out her hair and stop wearing spectacles, and then I had you bring him to call at our hotel where he could meet her, and I think it isn't a bit nice of you to insinuate I'm a matchmaker."

"I remember the year we went into the Canadian woods, the tender care you took of the young fellow who was ostensibly camping for his health, but who turned out to be the enterprising gentleman who robbed your uncle's bank. Then there was the woman book-agent who came to our apartment in the winter and—"

"You know I don't care for ancient history, Jack, and besides every one makes mistakes sometimes reading human nature, and it's hardly kind of you to imply that poor, patient little Mrs. Hodges isn't honest."

"Why, my dear, what a suggestion! I would never have put such a thought into words," I exclaimed self-righteously, and Pamela scorned to reply.

I was deep in a black and white study of the shore line one day when Pamela interrupted my work by announcing triumphantly, "Mrs. Hodges is unhappy, Jack."

"Even with your passion for finding pathetic cases, it seems almost heartless for you to gloat over her misery."

"I'm not gloating. I only want to show you I was right about her."

"My dear, I never doubted it for a minute. You have the keenest nose for other people's troubles of any one I ever knew."

"I don't admire your figure of speech." Pamela pretended to sulk, something she can never do successfully. "Oh, Jack, it's really very sad and I'm so sorry for Mrs. Hodges. I don't believe she would ever have told me about her daughter if I hadn't asked her who was the original of that awful crayon portrait in the best room. She said it was her daughter, Birdie. Then she began to cry, and of course I tried to comfort her and she told me she was 'wearying' to see Birdie. She says sometimes she wakes up in the night and feels as if she'd just scream if she couldn't see her. Isn't it dreadful, Jack, for her to be separated from her only child in this cruel way?"

"Yes it is. I feel very much upset about it, myself. But it would relieve me some to know the reason of this miserable state of things."

Pamela threw me a haughty glance, which is quite often all the response she deigns to make to what she is sometimes pleased to call my untimely humor.

"Little by little Mrs. Hodges told me all. She is naturally reserved, but I think she was glad to have me encourage her to speak." (I could well imagine with what gentle but crafty tenderness my sweet girl coaxed the story from the sorrowing mother.) "It seems that Mr. Hodges and his neighbor, Elmer Brown, had a fierce quarrel many years ago about the line fence between their places, and of course, as so often happens, fuel was constantly added to the flame of their enmity. The Brown dog chased the Hodges' sheep and the Hodges' turkeys despoiled the Brown vegetable garden and so, as Mrs. Hodges says, the feeling between the two families grew from bad to worse. And when Birdie confided to her mother that she loved Elmer Brown and was engaged to marry him, she knew there was plenty of trouble ahead. She was right, for Mr. Hodges said he'd never give his consent and he threatened all sorts of dire things if she married without it. 'No wedding-fixings, no visiting, no inheritance,' in short, no forgiveness for his daughter if she went against his will."

"You did discover a real live story, didn't you, Pam?" I admitted magnanimously.

"I most certainly did," Pamela spoke with some pride. "Well, Birdie and Elmer did what might have been expected, ran away and were married. The girl wrote a little note to her father saying how sorry she was to be disobedient, but she didn't think it fair for her father's quarrel to be visited upon the children; as it would make her so unhappy to be near the father who had always been so loving and kind, if he were angry at her, she and her husband were going away to live. And they did, Jack, they went a hundred miles, which to poor Mrs. Hodges seems an insurmountable distance.

"This Spring, when news came that a baby had arrived, Mr. Hodges softened a little and went so far as to say that Mrs. Hodges could go to see the child, if she could save enough money for the trip. But save money—why, she never has any to save. She says some farmers' wives have the egg-money, but they take their eggs to the village store and trade them for groceries and dry goods. She says the little boy baby will be a man grown before she can get enough money together to pay her fare one way. Mr. Hodges has plenty of cash, but he handles it all himself, and as his wife says, he's that obstinate he wouldn't give her any for the trip if he wanted to, and I half believe he does want to."

"It appears to be a hopeless case," I said, "unless, Pam, you can loan her the money."

"No, I thought of that at once, but she says Mr. Hodges would be terribly angry if she took a cent from me, he's so proud."

"Proud and stubborn, the tough old

DRAWN BY ETHEL L. COE

"I think we have landed in the midst of a story"

sour apple. Well, I'm betting on you, Pamela, I know you'll find a way to outwit him."

"If I don't it wont be because I haven't tried."

My wife's tone of voice argued badly for the safety of old Hodges' moneybags.

I knew from the very poise of Pamela's head as she came swinging down the hill road to the nook where I was drawing one afternoon, that she had found a solution to Mrs. Hodges' financial difficulties.

"How did you manage it?" I asked.

"You'd never guess, so I'll tell you at once. This morning Mrs. Hodges noticed my bowl of pennies on the bureau.

" 'My sakes,' she asked, 'what in the world do you do with so many pennies?'

"I answered that you and I always saved every penny we got for some cherished object. I told her about the furniture and books we had bought with our pennies and the theater-tickets they have purchased. Then it suddenly occurred to me our chance had come to help her.

" 'Why don't you see if you can get Mr. Hodges to save his pennies for your visit to your daughter?' I asked.

" 'It would take us pretty near forever to get enough,' she replied.

" 'Oh, I don't believe so,' I said, 'for they accumulate faster than you'd think. Mr. Hodges is sitting on the porch. Why don't you ask him now?'

"I almost pushed her out of the room and I watched her as she approached her lord and master with a kind of dogged shyness; then I turned back from the window and waited to hear the result.

" 'He says it's a crazy notion, and he guesses there aint enough pennies in the county to do what I want, but he promised to let me have everyone he gets, if I'll stop grieving for Birdie for a whole month.'

" 'You wont be grieving, for before the month is out, you'll be with your daughter.'

" 'Oh, my, not in a month,' she fairly gasped. 'He says he hardly ever gets any pennies.'

" 'Yes, in a month, or in a week, if you prefer,' I remarked calmly and she looked at me in a dazed sort of way as I opened my trunk and lifted out box after box of pennies. 'Perhaps your husband wondered what made this trunk so heavy when he and the man carried it in here,' I said, 'but just as we were leaving home, I discovered I had forgotten to send my pennies to the bank with my few other valuables, so not liking to leave them in our empty flat, I crammed them into my trunk, and here they are ready for the trip.'

" 'Ready for the trip,' she echoed.

" 'Yes, I think there's more than enough here to pay your fare both ways and give you a little spending money, too. It happens, fortunately, that we owe for three weeks' board and Jack shall pay your husband to-day with these pennies.'

"Really she was almost hysterical in her pleasure, and I think mixed with her delight is a tiny bit of fear of how Mr. Hodges will take it. So, Jack, I want you to leave that tiresome old sketch"—a very clever water-color drawing indeed—"and come up to the house and count those pennies and pay him as soon as you can, so as to get the agony over, if there is any."

No matter what other faults I may be convicted of, no one can accuse me of not obeying my wife, so it was only a little while before Pamela and I were settling our board-bill, with Mrs. Hodges looking on tremblingly.

"Wall, ye cornered me, aint ye?" said old Hodges gruffly as I heaped the pennies up before him in an imposing mass. "It aint often I get caught in a deal like this, and I declare I never saw so many coppers together, or separate I reckon, in all my life."

He looked at them wonderingly and gave a long, low whistle.

"Why," his eyes twinkled suddenly, "I guess there's enough of them to pay my fare to Birdie's, too, and I don't see as that little boy baby there wouldn't be as glad to get acquainted with his grandpap as with his grandma."

Pamela motioned to me to leave the old people alone together, and as we withdrew, she whispered, smiling a wee bit tearfully, "Didn't I tell you, he was sweet and sound at the core?"

Parisian Fashion Model IX B

FROM LIFE

By special contract w .h REUTLINGER, PARIS

Maison Redfern: Evening coat of rose satin overlaid with embroidered mousseline de soie.

Parisian Fashion Model X B

FROM LIFE

By special contract with REUTLINGER, PARIS

Maison Béchoff-David:—Evening costume of blue mousseline trimmed with silver, and black mousseline. The coat is of black velvet trimmed with old gold.

Parisian Fashion Model XI B

FROM LIFE

By special contract with REUTLINGER, PARIS

Maison Redfern:—Princesse costume of white broadcloth developed in wide shoulder straps; the skirt trimmed with velvet appliqué.

Parisian Fashion Model XII B

FROM LIFE

By special contract with REUTLINGER, PARIS

Maison Cheruit:—Dinner costume of blue pastel shade, trimmed with Venetian embroidery and finished with Zibeline.

Parisian Fashion Model XIII B

FROM LIFE

By special contract with REUTLINGER, PARIS

Maison Bechoff David:—Tailored costume of blue broadcloth: the jacket opening over an embroidered waistcoat.

Parisian Fashion Model XIV B

FROM LIFE

By special contract with REUTLINGER, PARIS

Maison Des Cuissons et Hudelist:—Dinner costume of black mousseline made over moiré.

Parisian Fashion Model XV B

FROM LIFE

By special contract with
REUTLINGER, PARIS

Maison Cheruit:—Stole and muff of ermine.

Parisian Fashion Model XVI B

FROM LIFE

By special contract with REUTLINGER, PARIS

Maison Redfern:—Carriage wrap of white broadcloth; the wide revers and cuffs trimmed with gold embroidery.

Mme. Alla Nazimova as *Hilda* in "The Master Builder"

Some Dramas of the Day

BY LOUIS V. DE FOE

A MONTH of the new dramatic season in New York slipped by without the production of a play that set in motion in a first-night audience those sub-currents of excited suspense which usually may be counted on to foreshadow almost certain popular success. Then came "The Thief"—note its sinister, succinct title. The verdict that followed its trial was clear and sweeping. Another month has passed and it remains the only serious drama which has acquitted itself in the court of public opinion and proved its right to live.

Under the title of "Le Voleur" this emotional and peculiarly fascinating study of feminine weakness by Henri Bernstein found continued popularity in Paris with M. Guitry and Mme. Le Bargy in the characters now played by Mr. Kyrle Bellew and Miss Margaret Illington. I attempted to see it during my last visit there but so great was its success that I was unable to secure seats. Therefore, I cannot judge how closely Mr. Haddon Chambers' English translation conforms to the original text, although I suspect it has been somewhat diluted; nor can I gauge the performance of the American cast by the celebrated French actors who created the characters. The difference would be considerable, I fear, yet not necessarily to the discredit of the American performers, considering the widely different tastes to which they must appeal.

The play is not a study in criminology, as its title would suggest. Crime is at the bottom of it, of course, but it is a story, sympathetically told, of a wife who falls

from a motive no more serious than vanity. I would not care to vouch for the correctness of some of its psychology. Since it is of French origin, its author does not allow sincerity to stand in the way of theatrical effect. He aims for emotionalism and as is the case with most plays designed for the Parisian stage, emotion frequently takes the form of hysteria. But in spite of inconsistencies, which I admit are there, I know of no example of recent dramatic writing, outside of the comedies of Victorien Sardou, which exceeds it in tensity of interest or technical expertness.

Let me outline the bitter experiences that befall *Richard Voysin* and his beautiful young wife, *Marie-Louise,* within the compass of a dozen hours. They have been married only a few months and you meet them in the flush of the honeymoon as guests in the country-house of their intimate friends, *M.* and *Mme. Lagardes.* It is evening of a summer-day and the pair are alone in the drawing-room. In an affectionate scene Bernstein quickly makes you acquainted with their characteristics. You understand at once that *Richard Voysin* is not rich but cautious and well-poised, and inclined to be indulgent with his pretty and alluring but vain, frivolous, extravagant, and girlishly irresponsible wife.

In an adjoining room young *Fernand Lagardes,* the nineteen-year son of the host, sits buried in one of Guy de Maupassant's books. When he gets a moment with *Marie-Louise* alone you discover that he has developed a foolish but dangerous passion for the young wife and has fallen into the habit of secreting love-letters in various out-of-the-way places in her boudoir. Her attitude towards him is made perfectly clear. She is too thoroughly in love with her husband to fall under the youth's influence. Yet she is weak and vain enough to amuse herself with him.

PHOTO BY HALL

Kyrle Bellew and Margaret Illington in "The Thief."

There is another guest, *M. Zambault,* whose identity presently is made known. He is a famous Parisian detective who has been brought to the house to ferret out a robbery mystery. Large sums of money have disappeared from *Mme. Lagardes'* writing-table and *Zambault,* after a week's work, has gathered together his evidence and is ready to make his report.

Imagine the consternation in the family when the crime is circumstantially fixed on *Lagardes'* own son. The father goes into a rage over the accusation. The guests are astounded. The detective, certain of his deductions, demands that the boy be questioned. The father, confident of his innocence, consents.

While the conference is going on *Fernand* is strolling in the garden and *Marie-Louise* is sent to summon him before the family council. She is gone only a moment and re-

turns to report that he is not to be found. But at the same instant *Fernand* appears on the landing of the stairs to bid his parents good-night. He is charged by the detective with the theft, confesses after a short cross-examination and, at last, hands over a package of the stolen bills that had been marked for identification.

But is *Fernand* really the thief? When the curtain rises again it is midnight and the *Voysins* are talking over the exciting event in their boudoir. *Voysin* cannot understand the boy's strange indifference. *Marie-Louise* is intent upon changing the discussion. She is more effusive than ever in her evidences of affection. In a romp which follows, *Voysin* gets possession of an old photograph-case and his wife's excited efforts to get it back leads to a playful examination of it, and a package of six thousand francs is disclosed. Greatly agitated, she attempts to explain how she came by so much money and, after tangled evasions, it suddenly dawns upon her horrified husband that she, not *Fernand*, is the thief. Driven into a corner by his merciless questioning she breaks down and confesses in a burst of hysterical fear.

Gertrude Berkeley and Mme. Nazimova in "The Master Builder"

This scene, clever as it is in its surprises and in its flood of emotionalism, quickly leads to another of even greater tensity. *Voysin* instantly reasons that *Marie-Louise* had found *Fernand* in the garden and warned him. Now, jumping from one conclusion to another, he becomes convinced that unrequited friendship could never have led the youth to make such a sacrifice. The compassion that at first was mixed with his horror suddenly turns to hatred and he charges his wife with infidelity.

The woman, by this time, is past evasion. *Fernand's* infatuation she admits, but she hysterically denies the uglier charge. She implores mercy, but *Voysin* will not hear her. She begs him to delay his judgment, but he casts her from him. It is only when she rushes to the balcony with threats of suicide that he consents to postpone until morning the confession of her disgrace to his hosts.

Thus matters stand at the beginning of the third act. Meanwhile, the *Lagardes* have decided upon the banishment of *Fernand* to a Brazilian plantation. The youth, ignorant of the disclosures of the night, hears his sentence without a murmur. The automobile is at the door. To one after the other he says good-by. *Voysin's* eyes are fixed upon *Marie-Louise*, and when she reaches for his outstretched hand she collapses. Her husband coldly and pitilessly explains to his hosts the cause of her distress.

A short scene winds up this exciting and strongly concentrated play. *Marie-Louise's* protestations that she stole

through vanity, because she wanted to buy pretty things to make herself look beautiful in her husband's eyes, are opposed by his graver accusation until she hands over to him the package of *Fernand's* unopened love-letters. These strengthen the boy's testimony of her good moral conduct and *Voysin* at last relents. The upshot is that he, instead of *Fernand,* goes to Brazil for his wife's rehabilitation and the curtain falls on a tense and not unsympathetic play.

There are a few loop-holes in the consistency of the tale which cannot be overlooked. It is hardly plausible that *Marie-Louise,* in danger of being trapped in her first criminal deed, could have maintained, during the investigation, the composure which the author dictates in order to mislead his audience into first believing that young *Fernand* is the thief. Is it also within the range of reason that the youth would blast his good name and future prospects for an unrequited passion?

PHOTO BY HALL

Louise Dresser in "The Girl Behind the Counter"

Barring these defects the play is expertly put together and the acting of its exciting scenes is admirable. Miss Illington denotes the frivolity, vanity, and girlish impetuosity of *Marie-Louise* better than her frightened hysteria. If she cannot rise to all the possibilities of the scene of the confession it is because the situation offers a range for emotional acting that would test the resources of Sarah Bernhardt. Mr. Bellew gives an intense impersonation of *Richard Voysin* in his finished, exact style. Mr. Leonard Ide acts *Fernand* creditably. The other characters are not so well played but they are comparatively unimportant.

With memory still fresh of the fine success last year of "The Hypocrites," I confidently expected that Mr. Henry Arthur Jones' new play, "The Evangelist," would yield this laggard season another dramatic sensation. Having sat through its first performance, I am disappointed but, I wager, not so much so as Mr. Jones who saw what he believed to be his best play slowly strangle itself on unmasticated moral preachments. "The Evangelist" is a trenchant sermon that will send chills up and down the spines of the unregenerate, but as drama it must be classed among the light-weights.

The small hypocrisies of the English upper-middle class always rub Mr. Jones the wrong way. Their petty bigotries are his main hobby and once more he assails them, tooth and nail. This time he hammers the mean, hair-splitting, jealous clergy of the established religious sects of an English manufacturing village over the shoulders of a street exhorter who is honest enough to practice what he preaches. The scenes in which he ranges the small souled shepherds against his

hero and an intellectual agnostic contains some of the most pungently satirical dialogue he has ever written but, unfortunately, it leads to nothing dramatic.

This exhorter, *Sylvanus Rebbings,* is brought to the village of Trentistown to avert a strike of dissatisfied workingmen by instilling the doctrine of the brotherhood of man in their hearts. He is opposed by the ministers of the various denominations in the town, and their opposition becomes persecution when, by his sensational methods of reaching outcasts, he converts a woman in lowly life whom the resident preachers regard as their prey.

Rebbings also recognizes in *Christabel Nuneham,* the young wife of his sponsor, a woman he has previously assisted in a street accident in Southampton. Her denial that she was there, coupled with her disturbed state of mind, makes him suspicious that all is not correct in her life, and he sets out to bring about her redemption.

PHOTO BY WHITE

Florence Roberts in "The Struggle Everlasting"

From this point the drama resolves itself into the old melodramatic "triangle" of the neglected wife, the selfish, indifferent husband, and the skulking, distrait lover. *Rebbings,* having aroused the suspicions of *Christabel's* husband, is resolved to tell the truth but yields to her appeal to him to save her for the sake of her child, and tells a lie. Then he sets out to induce the woman to make a frank confession to her husband.

In the only really dramatic situation in the play his campaign for rousing *Christabel's* conscience succeeds. From her art-gallery window, the sinful wife watches a revival-meeting over which the exhorter presides and sees an erring woman in low-class life brought to her knees in repentance. Her's has been a sin parallel to the wife's and the curtain falls as the rich woman, contrite and sobbing, goes humbly to the door of her husband's study.

The sweet spirit of forgiveness that reigns in the last act and the saccharine generosity that is dispensed by the deceived husband lead one to believe that the millenium has arrived. Only the hero-exhorter, *Rebbings,* is martyred. He goes to jail, hounded by the revengeful clergy and thus, banally, the play ends.

Ordinarily I would pass over Mr. Edwin Milton Royle's "modern morality play," "The Struggle Everlasting," in silence, for even with the unique idea that forms its kernel, it will never set afire the waters adjacent to New York. But some plays are interesting even in comparative failure, and this one, in particular, is so far removed from the

contributions of most of the hack-writers for the stage that it merits a brief description.

I can imagine Mr. Royle sitting under the strange spell of that old relic of the British Museum, "Everyman," which was resurrected in this country several years ago, and thinking beautiful thoughts. "Why not write a modern 'Everyman?'" ponders Mr. Royle. "Why not ferret out the devil that lurks in human nature by means of an up-to-date morality play?"

So Mr. Royle primed his fountain-pen with symbolistic ink and "The Struggle Everlasting" was the result. The characters he invoked were *Mind, Body, Soul, Worldly-Wise, Simple, Bacchus,* and other generalized states and conditions of the human organism. Then, to link his glittering generalities with mundane affairs, he introduced a *Musician,* a *Chorus Girl,* a *Pugilist,* a *Janitor,* an *Actor,* a *Banker,* and a *Prince.* He laid his acts "In The Wilderness," "In The University," "In the World," and "Beyond," and dated the time of his play's action as "One Day Is As A Thousand Years And A Thousand Years As One Day."

PHOTO BY HALL

Lew Fields and Connie Ediss in "The Girl Behind the Counter"

The drama is surely unique in its conception and arrangement. It has a corner-stone of a good idea, at least. Its weakness is in its superstructure. Mr. Royle has not the intellectual depth, technical proficiency, or literary ability to carry out the fable as he conceived it. His intention was to show that the body, without the directing force of the mind or the redeeming influence of the soul, is a prey to impulse and must eventually plunge to disaster.

In the prologue, *Body* was represented as a beautiful wood-sprite who lived in the trunk of a tree. *Mind* was a stalwart youth who had cast off the restraints of society and had come to the forest to live the simple life. *Soul* was a new-born babe whose mother, *Body,* had killed it.

In the first act *Body* had come down to earth, for she appeared among roistering college youths in the disguise of a servant-maid. She was next disclosed as a siren in a den of infamy where, one after the other, she brought *Princes, Pugilists, Actors,* and *Bankers* to ruin. In the final act she was wavering on the verge of reformation, urged by *Soul,* who had taken on the corporeal proportions of a stalwart clergyman, and

PHOTO BY WHITE

Arthur Byron, E. E. Morrison, and Florence Roberts in "The Struggle Everlasting"

menaced by *Mind,* who, as a student, was assailing her with the damning club of his intelligence. During the temporary absence of both she rouged her cheeks, in order that she might look beautiful in death, drank a phial of poison and succumbed. Her fate reminded one of the lines of the old song:

> With a cup of cold pizen
> Within her inside
> The lady turned over,
> Kicked the bucket—and died.

Someone will write a modern morality play some day but he will be a dramatist gifted with soaring imagination and poetic inspiration. "The Struggle Everlasting," even if it hops nimbly from trivialties to platitudes and stumbles constantly over meaningless verbal pomposities, at least points the way.

Miss Florence Roberts, Mr. Arthur Byron, Mr. Robert Peyton Carter, Mr. E. W. Morrison, Mr. Franklin Roberts, and a dozen others spent much time and effort preparing for the play, and Mr. Henry B. Harris cut into the profits of "The Lion and the Mouse" to give it a handsome scenic equipment. Mrs. Leslie Carter, to whom the character of *Body* was offered, was wise in her generation. She read it over and decided that she would rather act *Camille.*

Ibsenism, when it takes the form of a psychological clinic of degenerate impulses, does not appeal to me. When the grim old Scandinavian dramatist—master technician of all the moderns—stood on the solid rock of sanity I bowed in reverence and awe. But when his mind began to wander and not even his translators and commentators were able to agree among themselves as to what he was trying to say, *vide* "The Master Builder" and "When We Dead Awake," I respectfully withdrew.

This, I perceive, is heresy for a dramatic-critic to utter. But I prefer being heretical to being buncoed. There are a few who profess to peer with Henrik Ibsen's eyes into the unexplored depths of human nature, but to me a philosophy which may be interpreted to suit any passing mood or fancy is no philosophy at all. Happily I do not stand either with the cranks or youthful, inexperienced

enthusiasts who believe that there must be something profound in those things which people of normal, healthy minds fail to understand.

These remarks are not an anti-Ibsen sermon. They are apropos of the production of "The Master Builder" by that strangely fascinating and uncommonly gifted Russian actress, Mme. Alla Nazimova, which, just now, is creating a great deal of interest in New York. The play does not appeal to me—no more does a morgue—but Mme. Nazimova's wonderfully fertile *Hilda Wangel* does. I admire her finely developed gifts of interpretation and impersonation; I marvel at her seemingly inexhaustible fund of manner and method, and I predict that when she finally elects to appear in a character which will give latitude to her powers of expression she will come into her own as a mistress of histrionic art.

As *Hilda Wangel* Mme. Nazimova is as a being transformed. She plays on a new set of emotions. Even her physical appearance is altered. There is nothing about her work in common with her *Nora* in "A Doll's House" or her *Hedda* in "Hedda Gabler." You will descry genius in the woman even through this fog of Ibsen's morbid symbolism.

It seems almost too strange to be true, but the new season's straggling procession of lame, infirm, and deformed musical-comedies has been broken at last by a robust, energetic, side-splitting show. To Mr. Lew Fields belongs the credit of having rescued this hybrid form of theatrical entertainment from the slough of despond in which it has been wallowing since the playhouses began to open. His comic character of *Henry Schniff*, "a soldier of misfortune," in "The Girl Behind the Counter" is quite the funniest thing he has done since he broke out of the Weber & Fields fold, and it is bringing him plenty of new distinction as a mirth-producer.

In London "The Girl Behind the Counter" did not seem particularly amusing to me when I saw it a year ago. It was compounded by a syndicate of librettists, lyricists, and composers whose names are of no importance now, for nothing but its framework was preserved by Mr. Edgar Smith, into whose hands it fell for American renovation. He brushed it up with new jokes, songs, and specialties, and when it was ready for Broadway it fairly shone.

Not being a clairvoyant, I am in no position to describe the plot. If one is there it surely is not apparent, either to the naked eye or an opera-glass; but Mr. Fields is very much in evidence, as are Miss Connie Ediss, Miss Louise Dresser, Miss Lotta Faust, Mr. Denman Waley, Mr. Joseph Ratcliff and a long retinue of clever performers, and for two acts they keep their audiences in a roar.

Mr. Fields is a German who thinks he has inherited a fortune and, with his ambitious wife, is out to lead the social life. His daughter has been a department-store clerk, which leads him into a burlesque shopping emporium where after much blundering, he is mistaken for a detective and put to work at a soda-fountain.

Mr. Field's antics while mixing soft drinks for women-shoppers would alone save a lame piece of this sort. He doesn't know one syrup from another and picks out the compounds by matching their colors with a rack of variegated neckties. When his wife comes for her refreshment he innocently gets down the calisaya bottle and helps her to accumulate a glorious "jag," during which she regales him on incidents of his own private life which he thinks have been unknown to her.

Later in the piece he gives a ball and lines up his waiters to give them a few morsels of advice on manners and methods. By the time he gets through with this seedy lot the laughing capacity of his hearers is almost exhausted. The best part of it is that Mr. Fields is not funny only by fits and starts, but continuously from the rise to the fall of the curtain.

The songs scattered through the piece are much brighter and more tuneful than any other musical-comedy has offered this season. The costuming is beautiful without being vulgarly gorgeous and good taste places the ballets on a plane that makes them thoroughly enjoyable.